

EXPERIMENT, EXPERIENCE AND ENCHANT: KNOWLEDGE SHARING BETWEEN MUSEUMS AND CONTEMPORARY PRACTITIONERS

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FIG 1
Stone cross slab, Pictish, found at Hilton of Cadboll, Ross and Cromarty, eighth century CE, the back highly decorated including a hunting scene, but the original carvings on the front were carved off for re-use as a gravestone (X.IB 189 Image © National Museums Scotland)

ABSTRACT

Knowledge sharing between contemporary practitioners and museum professionals can be more than just investigating how something is made. It is also about working together to understand why an object was created, and by whom; how each artefact has a story to tell, of its journey through time and the places it has been. It is a way to re-evaluate assumed conjecture and break out of disciplinary biases through an understanding of materiality. For the practitioner, working with curators and conservators affords a deeper understanding of the historical context of their craft; and museum professionals gain a tangible experience of a medium to better understand its potential.

In 2018 the internationally acclaimed metalsmith Simone ten Hompel was commissioned by National Museums Scotland (NMS) and the Glenmorangie Company to create a new work inspired by our curatorial research on the collection of silver artefacts from early medieval Scotland. Simone had no prior knowledge of the period, but her familiarity with the material and interdisciplinary practice allowed her to embrace the intensive period of research within the museum's collections, fruitfully collaborating with curators and conservators, and to travel across Scotland to understand its history and unique landscapes. This resulted in the creation of a work of art that expresses to our audience Scotland's journey through time, its changing landscape, and the continual rediscovery of its past.

Within this article, we look to share how these discussions shaped the way in which Simone as a practitioner

approached NMS's archaeological silver collections, and how she in turn allowed curators to gain new insight around materiality. We will discuss how this allowed us all to 'see' past makers through their methodology of creation, and explain how this unique experiment in knowledge sharing helped her to create her new sculptural work of art.

THE GLENMORANGIE COMMISSION

The Glenmorangie Commission of 2018 to 2020 was part of the fourth phase of the Glenmorangie Research Project (GRP) at NMS. The GRP was a unique partnership between a corporate sponsor, the Glenmorangie Company, a major Scottish whisky distiller, and the Department of Scottish History and Archaeology at NMS. The partnership was inspired by a rebranding exercise in 2008, in which the Glenmorangie Company adopted a panel of Pictish sculpture from the eighth-century Hilton of Cadboll Stone as their 'Signet' or logo.¹ The Hilton of Cadboll Stone (Fig 1) is an iconic artwork of the Pictish period which currently stands at the entrance to the NMS's Early People gallery, but was originally found on what is now the Glenmorangie Company's estate near Tain, in the north-east of Scotland. Previously, when the Hilton of Cadboll Trust commissioned sculptor Barry Grove to carve a modern reconstruction of the Cadboll Stone, the Glenmorangie Company donated the land on which the replica currently stands. (Fig 2).²

Coinciding with the adoption of the Pictish-inspired Signet, the Glenmorangie Company commissioned a three-year research fellowship at NMS to produce a public-friendly book on early medieval art and archaeology. It was intended as a way of fleshing out the context of the Cadboll Stone, with a

1. David V Clarke, Alice Blackwell, and Martin Goldberg, *Early Medieval Scotland: Individuals, Communities and Ideas*, Edinburgh, 2012, p IX.

2. Heather F James, Isabel Henderson, Sally Foster, and Siân Jones (eds), *A Fragmented Masterpiece: Recovering the Biography of the Hilton of Cadboll Pictish Cross-Slab*, Edinburgh, 2008, p 8.



FIG 2
Simone ten Hompel examining the recreated Hilton of Cadboll Stone, Tain, June 2019 (Image © National Museums Scotland)



FIG 3
'Das Wie und Das Was', The Why and the How, steel plinth with gilded decoration with detachable silver bowl, London, 1995, Simone ten Hompel (A.1995.604 Image © National Museums Scotland)

distinct focus on art and craft of the early medieval period. The partnership would be marked by a series of annual lectures at the museum bringing contemporary artists and makers together with curators and archaeologists, entitled the Glenmorangie Annual Lectures. The project also involved major craft commissions in a twist on experimental archaeology, involving the recreation of 'lost' objects made from perishable materials. One was a recreation of a full-size wooden Pictish throne, an object depicted on several carved stones contemporary with the Hilton of Cadboll Stone, but of which no traces have ever been found. Another commission was a set of leather book satchels, also depicted on numerous Pictish stones, but which only survive in scraps.³ Both were carried out by artists and makers with no experience of historical recreation but considerable expertise in their chosen medium: in these cases wood and leather. The experiment was not about historical accuracy, but to observe how the maker would take these 2D images of objects from a millennium ago, and then work out the design to render it in 3D using their own experience. The curators would record the tools and techniques, throwing light on how these lost objects were created, and in the case of the leather satchel, used.

Given the renewed interest in the early medieval collections this project generated, and the benefits from the enhanced research on this part of the museum's collections, the GRP was renewed for a further three phases, culminating in 2021. Each phase continued the commitment to annual events with invited artists, and further recreations were commissioned and exhibited.⁴ At all stages the invited artists and makers were experts in material knowledge and contemporary design. The GRP therefore continued the engagement between archaeology

and art embedded into the design of the Early People gallery at the NMS, which opened in 1998, and incorporated new works by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi and Andy Goldsworthy into the display of objects.⁵

For the final phase of the project, a different approach to craft commissions was adopted. Instead of commissioning an artist to reproduce a medieval object, this time a call went out to metalsmiths based in the UK inviting them to apply for the opportunity to work directly with the GRP to create a new work of contemporary craft. The maker would be given access to the NMS collections, on and off display, for a period of six months, working closely with the Glenmorangie Research Fellow who would share their knowledge and research into the outlined period, and would then create a new work inspired by what they had seen and learned. A judging panel, consisting of a mix of museum professionals and external experts, unanimously selected leading contemporary metalsmith and educator Simone ten Hompel for the commission, making NMS the first public institution to commission ten Hompel, and adding a second permanent acquisition of her artwork (Fig 3).

After a decade of commissioning recreations for the benefit of archaeological research the Glenmorangie Commission would for the first time be a collaboration between two departments of the NMS: Scottish History & Archaeology, and Art & Design (now part of the Global Arts, Cultures and Design department). The curators would get full access to the artist's process, in order to record the progress of devising and making the object.⁶ In addition to the value added to our interpretation of material on display, the commission would promote the exchange of knowledge between specialists, drawing out new

3. Op cit see note 1, pp 106-12.

4. Mhairi Maxwell, Jennifer Gray, and Martin Goldberg, 'Design Archaeology: Bringing a Pictish Inspired Drinking Horn Fitting to Life', Katie Bunnell and Justin Marshall (eds), *All Makers Now? Craft Values in 21st Century Production*, Falmouth, 2014, pp 97-103.



FIG 4
Simone ten Hompel discussing the Skaili Hoard
Orkney, tenth century, with Glenmorangie
Fellow Dr Adrián Maldonado
(Image © National Museums Scotland)

conversations and possibilities around decorative art and craft in Scotland, and celebrate the art of metalsmithing, a craft that is as important to the economic landscape and artistic contribution of this country in the

medieval period as today. And though the finished artwork would be acquired into the Archaeology collection, it would be put on long-term display in the Art & Design gallery, Making and Creating, connecting two seemingly disparate galleries in the museum. This represents a statement on how the past continues to inspire the present, and how craft connects them both.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

The last phase of the GRP was tasked with creating a new vision for the archaeology of the ninth to twelfth centuries, an era of rapid change, political instability, and cultural diversity, out of which the Scottish nation was born. It is an era represented in the collection by a number of prominent silver hoards dating from the Pictish and Viking periods (AD 300-1100) (Fig 4). These are notable not just as piles of precious metal but for the different qualities of silver and the changing value of precious metalworking skills they represent. The social role of silver had been the focus of the previous phase of the GRP,⁷ so there was lots of new data and new ideas near to hand for consideration that could be shared with ten Hompel. A key part of this research included tracing the sources and recycling of silver, in an effort to follow the material as it moved

through time. Silver and other precious metals are inherently recyclable, so much so that, as ten Hompel liked to say during these research workshops, all silver that is used today has atoms contained within it that can be traced back to Roman and other ancient periods, just as we are descendants of the people who made these works. This was one of many ways in which our different approaches to the material chimed well together. As such, given the current line of research by the GRP and the artist's previous work and expertise, it was perhaps natural that we gravitated toward silver as a key subject of enquiry.

It was in talking through these materials, and handling some of the artefacts outside of their cases, that we first began talking about what ten Hompel called different 'flavours' of silver and their affordances. Ten Hompel, with over four and a half decades of practice, sees metal as being her first language, allowing her to express herself, she feels, more eloquently than the written or spoken word. This material knowledge and expertise allows her to identify different alloys by eye, in a way anticipating their sensory qualities; stating that

in my understanding, as a practitioner-researcher, of how artefacts that matter to us are and come into being, the importance of historical origins is manifested in both scholarly knowledge and also a sense of the material.⁸

Close investigation of wear patterns, patination, and corrosion on the metal artefacts held at NMS allowed for a discussion about how objects were used, and for what functions they were intended, even in the absence of knowledge of the archaeological context. For ten Hompel,

5. Alice Blackwell, 'Past Meets Present: Archaeology and Contemporary Art at the National Museum of Scotland' National Museums Scotland Blog, June 22, 2012: <https://blog.nms.ac.uk/2012/06/22/past-meets-present-archaeology-and-contemporary-art-at-the-national-museum-of-scotland/>, accessed 13 May 2022.

6. The artist's archive and mock-ups were acquired along with the completed artwork.

7. Alice Blackwell, Martin Goldberg, and Fraser Hunter, *Scotland's Early Silver*, Edinburgh, 2017.

8. Simone ten Hompel, *Simone ten Hompel*. *Coordinate: The Glenmorangie Commission*, AAD Practice Research Portfolios, London, p 12.

9. Ibid.

10. Op cit see note 7, pp 94-105.

11. A Small, C Thomas and D M Wilson, *St. Ninian's Isle and its Treasure*, Oxford, 1973, vol 1, pp 174-5.

12. Imogen Greenhalgh, 'Simone ten Hompel, Conversations with Metal', *Crafts Magazine*, September/October 2016, p 79.



FIG 5
Metal ingot moulds, sandstone and steatite, circa 600-900 CE, found at the Brough of Birsay, Orkney (X.HB 570, 572, 575, 577 Image © National Museums Scotland)

the precision of an understanding, and the specificity of knowing, that comes with experience is the awareness of the way in which artefacts get produced.⁹

To confirm her theory around process and creation she continually asked to be shown the original tools and workshops but, as is so often the case in archaeology, our surviving evidence is piecemeal, and there was only so much we could bring to bear on her questions. In effect, as with the previous craft recreations of the GRP, much would

have to be filled in by the particular expertise of the maker to understand how something was made and what may have formed and shaped these artefacts. Still, there were moments of recognition across time that were able to anchor ten Hompel in the material culture of the research period. For instance, the use of bar ingots for transporting silver remains the same over time, and a four-sided mould of steatite from the Brough of Birsay, Orkney



FIG 6
St Ninian's Isle Hoard, circa 750 - 825 CE, found on St Ninian's Isle, Shetland; it contains twenty-eight objects, all are made from silver aside from a fragment of the jawbone of a porpoise, also discovered with the hoard (X.FC 268 - 296 Image © National Museums Scotland)

was similar to the kinds of bar moulds she would use in her own workshop thereby connecting ten Hompel as a maker directly to the craftsmen of this period (Fig 5).

An early subject of enquiry was a hoard of silver from St Ninian's Isle,

Shetland (Fig 6). At this point in the Pictish period, circa AD 800, silver was in short supply in northern Britain. The Picts had been introduced to silver by the Roman Empire whose armies plied the locals with silver coins in order to keep the peace. They did not use these coins as currency but instead melted them down into new kinds of objects like massive silver chains, intended to show off a large amount of silver, but masking just how little was actually available. The third phase of the GRP had confirmed just how much of Scotland's early medieval jewellery was made of recycled Roman silver, even centuries after the supply had dried up.¹⁰ Over the centuries that core of pure Roman silver had been diluted, but still left distinctive, chemically detectable traces. The St Ninian's Isle Hoard represents the lengths to which the Picts of Shetland stretched their dwindling supply. The twelve horseshoe-shaped penannular brooches found in this hoard look similar at first glance but, on closer inspection, are a range of different hues of silver which show the various alloys used, something ten Hompel, due to her material expertise, was able to pick up on right away. The silver content of these brooches ranged from as little as 30% and no more than 82%¹¹; some of the eight bowls from the hoard barely look like silver now due to the extent of the corrosion of the copper in the alloy. Ten Hompel's own practice explores the variety of colours and textures that silver alloys can produce, as well as familiar domestic forms like the bowls and spoons of this Shetland hoard, creating works of metal art that are

immediately distinctive in the way in which she reworks objects we encounter every day and makes them new

and allow conversations to manifest "around corners, and over space and time and distance".¹² This desire to



FIG 7
Chain of double rings, silver, early medieval 400-600 C E, with penannular terminal ring engraved with one of the symbols as used on Pictish sculptured stones, from Parkhill, Aberdeenshire (X.FC 147 Image © National Museums Scotland)

create tacit and tangible connections, not only for herself but for those who encounter her beautiful metalwork, drove ten Hompel's research at NMS, asking questions about how the objects had been deposited and how they had subsequently been treated and conserved, so to better understand the material and its place in Scotland's history. This questioning opened up further investigation and interrogation of the museum's archives, asking questions of ourselves that had not satisfactorily been addressed in print before, and signalling the start of many discussions, and shared knowledge exchange, that would mark this project as a collaborative venture between maker and museum professional.

This collaborative understanding between ten Hompel and the museum created a privileged position in which to ask questions from her about specific objects in the collections. In archaeology one rarely finds finished objects as well as the workshops in which they were made, leaving are numerous gaps and disconnections that we can backfill with targeted fieldwork and comparative research. Some classes of object, however, remain shrouded in mystery, including the above-mentioned massive silver chains, made in what archaeologists believed would have been a conspicuously difficult and resource-intensive manner (Fig 7). Each link in these chains is made of a pair of silver hoops, rounded in profile, looped together into chains. The hoops are clearly bent from a single rod but they are often too thick to have been drawn and are highly polished (from use or by design), leaving very little evidence of how they were worked. For ten Hompel, when considering how something could be made, she tries to understand the materiality of metal, explaining that her own understanding has evolved over time and that she and metal

have a conversation. It's not the kind of conversation we're having right now, but it is a conversation – about how far I can go. The metal says, "if you do this, then you can do that". And if you overdo it, the metal will crack.¹³

For ten Hompel this resistance, or "feedback" as she calls it, is part and parcel of an ongoing exchange that makes her an expert within the craft. As a passionate educator as well as an expert craftsperson, instead of explaining this vocally, and the various ways in which the chain could have been crafted, ten Hompel decided the best way was to extend the knowledge exchange by inviting us into the workshop to experience her craft at first hand. Anna Gordon, Head of Programme at Glasgow School of Art, agreed to host this material experiment and exchange stating that for them

the process of making was intriguing, and the contemporary jewellers and silversmiths were keen to share knowledge on different theories of how a 4mm diameter wire could be drawn down and formed into such thick silver rings.¹⁴

Using silver kindly supplied by the Incorporation of Goldsmiths in Edinburgh, the authors, and Martin Goldberg (Principal Curator in Medieval Archaeology) joined the GSA staff and Artists in Residence to watch how ten Hompel drew down a silver bar into a round-profiled rod, then twisted it into a spiral using a former, which could then be sawn into individual links and hammered closed in an approximation of the methods used to make the massive silver chains in the collection, before having the chance ourselves to try (Fig 8). Many questions still remain, but this chance to work the metal was an eye-opening, tactile experience that changed the perspective of the

13. Op cit see note 12, p 78.

14. Unpublished correspondence with Anna Gordon, Head of Department and Programme Leader BA (Hons) Silversmithing & Jewellery Design, the Glasgow School of Art.



FIG 8 —————
 The Silver Knowledge Exchange Workshop at Glasgow School of Art, Sarah Rothwell (left), Senior Curator, Modern & Contemporary Design and Simone ten Hompel (right), Simone showing how it should be done; encouraging Dr Adrián Maldonado in drawing silver; and the finished chain of rings, with only a twice hammered thumb
 (Image © National Museums Scotland)

participants, from a focus on the finished product, to the maker and the heat of the kiln. It created a space, as Gordon states, for further understanding of how a maker's particular knowledge of specialist-making skills can help museums unlock history.¹⁵

Another fortuitous crossover with our curatorial work that benefited from ten Hompel's material knowledge expertise was the ongoing conservation of the

Galloway Hoard, a significant collection of rare and unique Viking-age objects of silver and other materials dated to A D 900, which was discovered in the south-west of Scotland in 2014 and assigned to the care of NMS in 2017 (Fig 9). The bulk of the objects contained in the hoard are silver arm-rings and ingots, in complete and hacked-up forms. These silver objects were used as a form of early currency in the Viking-age Irish Sea area, where coins were not yet in wide circulation. Though they were produced in bulk quantities, they were all made by hand, so each piece is a unique work of craftsmanship. When exposed to this collection, ten Hompel drew our attention to the tell-tale sprues, bubbles, and other evidence for casting, allowing us to build up a picture of the processes employed in the creation of many of the artefacts. Considering the objects this way was condensing the space between the time of manufacture and our own, bringing the moment the silver was poured into the mould over a thousand years ago into perspective. In addition, when considering the other metal objects in the Galloway Hoard, particularly the silver brooches and other dress items, ten Hompel's perspective as a maker was invaluable to the lead conservator, Mary Davis, who was in the process of removing the corrosion and dirt from the surface of these objects in advance of display. Following a series of productive exchanges, they worked out the process of how the Anglo-Saxon

FIG 9 —————
 The Galloway Hoard prior to Mary Davis's conservation work, excluding the silver-gilt lidded vessel that much of the hoard was contained in, and the wrapped objects from within.
 (Image © National Museums Scotland)



15. Ibid.



FIG 10
Simone ten Hompel, Mary Davis, artefact conservator (Galloway Hoard), and Dr Martin Goldberg, Principal Curator of Medieval Archaeology viewing part of the Galloway hoard within the stores at NMS (Image © National Museums Scotland)

hinge straps Davis was then conserving had been carved and inlaid with niello and gold, and the clasps then soldered on.¹⁶ When reflecting on the importance of this exchange, Davis stated that

the slow nature of this work allows the opportunity to make many observations about the artefacts ... In many respects this brings me closer to the original metalworker; I see original scratches and polishing marks, even intricate patterns left by individual tools. Added to this, conversations with Simone have added so much more to understanding the material and techniques and have helped me to clarify such observations through the eyes and knowledge of the metalworker.¹⁷

In turn the insight into the craft techniques employed by these metalworkers, and the materials science provided by Davis, was equally important to ten Hompel and helped inform the creation of the commission. An unexpected insight for us on the curatorial side was the way that Davis's and ten Hompel's work dovetailed in many interesting ways, particularly in a keen knowledge of materials and their reactive properties. Exchanging ideas regarding the treatment of corrosion and patination on silver in advance of the hoard going on display again quantified to the observers of the project that through open and willing knowledge exchange, benefits to both parties' practice can be established, which in turn, create a deeper understanding of the material (*Fig 10*).

During ten Hompel's tenure as the Glenmorangie Commission artist it has been fascinating to see how she approached the material artefacts of medieval Scotland that were presented to her. As she says herself, she came to the project as

an 'outsider' from the world of design practice; from outside the world of museums and from another country,¹⁸

with no connection to early medieval archaeology or the changing history of Scotland between the ninth and twelfth centuries. While she had visited Edinburgh and Glasgow on several occasions as part of her academic career, she had not experienced the country further. Though a trip to see all the various locations of the museum's early silver collections was out of the question ten Hompel was able to visit Orkney where numerous key objects in the collection, particularly the Skail Hoard, one of the largest silver hoards in Britain, was unearthed. Here she met with Professor David Griffiths, of the University of Oxford who excavated the findspot of the Skail Hoard, who kindly facilitated access to sites few tourists get to see. One of these was the subterranean chamber and Iron Age smithy of Mine Howe, which ten Hompel says for her was a particularly moving experience, bringing her in touch with the rituals surrounding metalsmithing in the ancient past. Being enclosed within this space, cut off from the contemporary world, even for just a moment, allowed ten Hompel to experience what it must have been like to work within this enclosed space, touch stones that were laid so long ago, smell the earth and the damp and be close to her fellow metalsmiths through the millennia. In reflecting on the project, Simone recalled that

there are apertures, views into these particular spaces of Scotland, places that I saw in Orkney, where you walk up a landscape, green, and all of a sudden there is a hill, and it has a hole in there, and it's really luring you into it, the slate and the building of it was really precise and very neatly organised, and inside there were again some square chambers,

16. See Mary Davis' blog on the conservation of these artefacts <https://blog.nms.ac.uk/2022/05/12/conserving-the-galloway-hoard-a-silver-brooch-goes-under-the-microscope/>

17. Unpublished talk given by Mary Davis at the Museum and Contemporary Craft Symposium held at NMS, March 2020.

18. Op cit see note 12.



FIG 11
Simone ten Hoppel looking out to the Moray Firth, in the bay just below Glenmorangie House
(Image © Sarah Rothwell)

and it was very geometric. They are cavities of time, but they are also more an imagination of that time.¹⁹

All of these experiences, both tangible and intangible, and the knowledge exchanges that manifested during her research, created a bond between ten Hoppel, the museum, its artefacts, and the country of Scotland, that would go on to inform and be an integral element of the finished artwork (Fig 11).

in, the artefacts she encountered, and the country of Scotland itself.

Through its form and production, the work aims to explore and articulate aspects of Scotland's story through the tectonic qualities and language of metal... reveal[ing] how new ideas in metalworking in the Early Mediaeval and Viking period in Scotland can be re-presented and embodied in an artefact and its production processes.²⁰



FIG 12a and 12b
coordinate, silver, corten steel, guiding metal, stainless steel, London, 2020, Simone ten Hoppel
(X.2020.32 Image © National Museums Scotland)



THE COMMISSION AND ITS LEGACY

The work of art that ten Hoppel created is entitled *coordinate* and explores Scotland's journey through time, its changing landscape and the continual rediscovery of its past, evoking the colours, textures, and decoration of this vibrant period. Its form with its three components is an abstract interpretation of the landmass (Fig 12a and 12b). Its surface treatment of oxidised corten steel balances the colours and textures of many different metals beyond silver which were important to metalsmiths of the ninth to twelfth centuries. The title refers pointedly to ten Hoppel's time as an 'outsider' navigating her way through this research subject, the knowledge exchange she participated

Its elements also signal the collaboration that took place between the worlds of craft, design, archaeology, and museum practice, featuring abstracted embodiments of the early medieval metal artefacts ten Hoppel came into contact with at the NMS that are important markers of the knowledge exchange which took place. For instance, the lower chamber is her interpretation of a museum case filled with some of the objects she first encountered here in the NMS. Within its confines, a small section of rings represents the Pictish silver chain discovered in Aberdeenshire that drew her attention on one of her first visits to the NMS in 2018 and was the impetus of the shared knowledge exchange workshop at Glasgow School of Art. This wee section of rings is an important tangible testament to the collaborative experiment and engagement that took place on that day, as it was created by the collective which took part (Fig 13).²¹ On the terminal there is a spikey thistle head that speaks to the large silver brooches with cross-hatched engraved terminals from the Skaili Hoard, one of the first objects ten Hoppel was able to handle, and is a tribute to the extended conversations she had with Maldonado on its construction and the employment of decoration during this period (Fig 14).²² Alongside these there is a direct reference to the benefactors of the commission. In the upper section,

19. NMS, 2020. The Glenmorangie Commission: *Coordinate Revealed*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w22ppGiyms>, accessed 25 November 2022.

20. Op cit see note 8, p 6.

21. NMS, 2019, The Glenmorangie Commission: *A Masterclass in Metal* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geQX7OT4EA8>, accessed 25 November 2022.



FIG 13 —
coordinate (Fig 12), detail of the lower compartment within which features the chain created by Simone ten Hompel at the GSA workshop (Image © National Museums Scotland)



FIG 14 —
coordinate (Fig 12), detail showing the abstracted and spikey thistle head at the top of the piece (Image © National Museums Scotland)

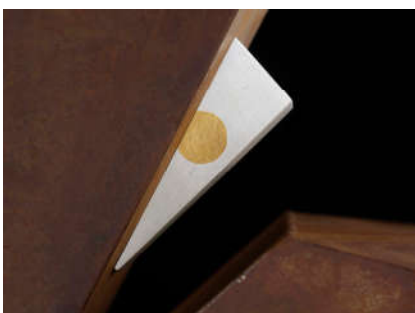


FIG 15 —
coordinate (Fig 12), detail of the silver facet with its golden orb (Image © National Museums Scotland)

22. NMS 2019. See The Glenmorangie Commission: The Journey Begins https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv__067TFqI accessed 25 November 2022

23. NMS 2019. See The Glenmorangie Commission: Presenting Designs <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MO3gR52imks> accessed 25 November 2022

24. Ibid.

an emerging facet of silver with a golden orb is seen. Its placement is roughly where Tain is situated on a map of Scotland and is the home of Glenmorangie. The form of the facet is a section of the Cadboll Stone which, as mentioned, was the genesis of the GRP itself. The golden orb is the dram of whisky shared with the judging panel when we travelled north together to Glenmorangie House to select from ten Hompel's proposals (Fig 15).²³ The hidden compartments suggest the chance discoveries of silver objects buried in the ground that archaeologists dream of, and her own experience of descending into the prehistoric chamber of Mine Howe. It also evokes a desire to create an impression of how an artefact, seemingly untouched by time, can reach out from the ancient past to speak to us today. Its colour and future patination were informed by her conversations with Davis and inspired by her field trips to Orkney and Tain.

The whole piece is about locations. It represents places in the museum, and places in Scotland, and it resembles, loosely, an interpretation of Scotland. I imagined walking around the piece, seeing it from the dark side, from the underneath side, and that was really what I wanted to have – the discovery, the appreciating of new things, and that is more important than one single point of view. The colour represents the peats, the heather landscapes, and of course the shades of whisky.²⁴

The legacy of the shared knowledge exchange is, as we have highlighted, evident within the very fabric of the sculpture and its decoration. However, the biggest impact, which did not reveal itself until after the artwork was completed, was the reorientation of Maldonado's vision for the ninth to twelfth centuries. Phase 4 of the GRP was originally entitled 'Creating

a Nation', aimed at the birth of the kingdom of Scotland. But over time, it became clear that the story was deeper than that of a single nation. The territory now known as Scotland was a mosaic of ethnic groups and languages during those centuries, the tiles of which had been shuffled about by the events of the Viking Age. The story of those years gradually became about how nations were made and unmade. Parts of what would become Scotland, Ireland, England, Wales, Norway, and the Kingdom of Man all overlapped in the area covered by the NMS collections. Nations are not naturally bounded, but constantly in flux, shaped by shared experience. One thing ten Hompel helped Maldonado realise is that we get the metaphor of the melting pot all wrong. We assume a 'melting pot' is a place where different people go in, and an assimilated character comes out, all their differences melted away. For some, the melting pot is pernicious, where character goes to be destroyed. In a similar way, archaeologists describe the silver of the St Ninian's Isle Hoard brooches as low-grade, diluted. However, ten Hompel reminded us that metal alloys all have different qualities: too much silver and the pin of the brooch is too soft and pliable, not ideal for bearing the load of a heavy woollen cloak, too much copper and the pin becomes brittle. This exchange of knowledge from maker to curator following the observation of material artefacts highlights the importance of collaborative working and how the inherent material knowledge that a maker possesses can aid museums to understand artefacts from our collective past further. Following their exchange, and to his surprise, when Maldonado went back and looked at the metal analysis, Simone's observations were borne out: the only two brooches whose pins had broken in antiquity were those with the highest ratio of copper to silver. Simone helped him



FIG 16 —
 Simone ten Hompel discussing the work with friends in the *3on* exhibition, Kunstpavillon im Alten Botanischen Garten, Munich, March 2020 just prior its closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Image © Simone ten Hompel)



FIG 17 —
 Detail of ten Hompel's untitled works for the *3on* exhibition, Kunstpavillon im Alten Botanischen Garten, Munich, March 2020, that explored the decorative motifs and forms she encountered at NMS (Image © Simone ten Hompel)

25. Adrián Maldonado, *Crucible of Nations: Scotland from Viking Age to Medieval Kingdom*, Edinburgh, 2021.

26. Hemispherical silver bowl decorated with chased lines outlined with dots, Pictish, from St Ninian's Isle, Shetland, eighth century, X.FC 268: <https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/collection-search-results/vessel-metal-bowl/132891>, accessed 25 November 2022

27. Arm ring X.2018.12.15: <https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/collection-search-results/arm-ring/746791>, accessed 25 November 2022

28. Unpublished correspondence between ten Hompel and Rothwell, July 2022.

appreciate that different alloys of silver have different affordances that create variances in colour, texture, malleability, and strength. All these variances matter, impacting on the way the material is worked, and continuing to shape the experience of the finished object as it ages. The melting pot does not destroy, it creates, and all the parts impact on the outcome. As a result, in the last year of the GRP, Maldonado, inspired by this exchange, hit on the idea that 'Creating a Nation' could use a twist as well, and the resulting book was instead titled *Crucible of Nations*.²⁵

What is also important to note is the impact which the project and knowledge exchange had upon ten Hompel continues beyond the confines of the museum, Scotland, and this commission, into the creation of a new body of work inspired by her direct experience and time at the museum and which premiered in the exhibition *3on* at the Kunstpavillon im Alten Botanischen Garten, Munich as part of the internationally renowned Munich Jewellery Week celebrations of 2020 (Fig 16). The body of work included an installation incorporating a series of decorative punched panels that reference some of the early medieval objects she encountered during the commission. For instance, in this image from her studio bench of the work in production (Fig 17) a number of panels with intersecting lines trace the interlaced ornament on the St Ninian's Isle silver bowls;²⁶ this was one of the first decorative features ten Hompel sketched in her notebook on her first visit with Maldonado and Rothwell to NMS. The motif that shows rows of fish-shaped stamps features on one of the arm rings within the Galloway Hoard²⁷ that ten Hompel became fascinated by, saying how she

wondered what metal they made it [the stamp] out of and how did they

make the pattern declining in size rolling it out then a punch.²⁸

The bossed dome on the left is an abstract representation of the thistle brooch from Skail.


Via this visual placement ten Hompel sublimely shared the knowledge of the collection and research happening at NMS with a new, design-focused European audience, who may not have been aware of the decorative and craft heritage of Scotland; thereby them to engage with and see the intricacy and level of craftsmanship of NMS's artefacts, and the very

minerals in the metals which are in the earth, which are the ancient colours, the colours they could make and would have used, the colours of Scotland.²⁹

CONCLUSION

Throughout this project ten Hompel openly shared her knowledge of her craft; engaged in discussions with curators, researchers, and conservators; and experienced Scotland's landscape and archaeological history first-hand. Likewise, the curators, researchers, and conservators shared their knowledge and were willing participants in ten Hompel's introduction to metalsmithing at GSA, engaging with silver directly, learning from its materiality in a direct conversation that was equal to her own when it came to handling the museum's artefacts. So, in some ways we were all, equally participating in interdisciplinary research that nurtured new ideas and creative outputs and resulted in deeper respect for the material and those who have worked with silver over the millennia.

For ten Hompel all of these experiences, experiments, and discussions helped to shape the way in which she, as an 'outsider', with no preconceptions of



Scotland's history, saw the development of Scotland during this period. As a metalsmith for over forty years, yes, she has her own knowledge and understanding of the material, but she did not have any prior knowledge of the pieces that were created in this period. For her this was all new, and she approached the commission with a fresh and unbiased outlook; embracing and absorbing all she was given and allowing her full imagination to explore and create a work of metal art that would evoke this period of Scottish history and consolidate all she had learned from this experience.

And in regard to ourselves as museum professionals, the opportunity to work with a master of their craft is an exciting chance to open doors and connections to a material, the process and techniques used to form and shape an artefact, artwork, or object that sometimes elude us. However, it is in the discussions and shared joy in the objects that we know we have found a true kindred spirit. This connection was cemented between us from the start when ten Hompel's enthusiasm and knowledge of the material spilled over during her first encounter with the collection, so much so that Maldonado found himself scrambling for paper and pen to make a note of some of her observations on items like the massive silver chains, and the brambling on the Skail thistle brooches. For Rothwell there was joy and pride witnessed in ten Hompel when viewing her former tutor and one of her protégé's artworks side by side on display in the Making & Creating gallery. We feel that an important and fitting testament of this remarkable project, and to the open and willing knowledge exchange that was encouraged by us all, is that ten Hompel and ourselves continue to work together to learn more and expand our collective knowledge on this subject.

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