



The Aberdeen Weaver Incorporation

Career Enhancement Award – J Gray Kilgour Medal

After decades of decline the UK textile industry, by the late 1980's the problems were being felt in Aberdeen and particularly at J & J Crombie an internationally known producer of luxury cloth, founded in Aberdeen in 1805. In late 1986, the Members of the Weaver Incorporation met to consider what they might do to promote and support weaving skills and knowledge given Aberdeen's long history in textile production and also through Gray's School of Art where weaving and textile design had been taught since the School's founding in 1885.

By the spring of 1997, the Members had agreed in principle to award a prize to a student, in their 3rd year, who demonstrated their interest and abilities in textiles and offered a proposal as to how the award money would be spent. The key would be a clear objective which would set the winner on a path of skill and knowledge, building on the foundation they had gained during their studies but importantly opening up opportunities which they might benefit from in their career following graduation. Staff at Gray's School of Art willingly supported and engaged with the plan and such was their enthusiasm that within a matter of weeks had recommended the first recipient, Ines Dillon. Her prize enabled her to develop her felt making knowledge and skills through attendance at classes in Huddersfield.

Satisfied with the outcomes, the Aberdeen Weaver Incorporation committed to continuing the Career Enhancement Award annually. By the 7th year, the City's Arts and Museum's Services sought to establish an exhibition in James Dunn's House where the work of the seven winners and runners up was featured in conjunction with a history of textiles and skill development in Aberdeen. The exhibition ran for a number of weeks and was well attended.

In 2002 a further development occurred in that the winner, apart from receiving the monetary award, would now receive a medal which was struck to commemorate the name and values of a long serving member of the Incorporation, J Gray Kilgour. J Gray Kilgour first became a member of the Weaver Incorporation in January 1922 and having faithfully served his Incorporation in its various offices and the Hall by being Factor of the Trinity Cemetery, passed away in 1995 after 73 years of membership. His family had had a long association both in the Textile industry, founding the well known company of Kilgour & Walker; membership of the Incorporated Trades, J Gray Kilgour's father, David, was Deacon of the Weavers on four occasions and also serving in the highest office, that of Deacon Convener; serving the Aberdeen community, David Kilgour apart from being a highly respected businessman, was Dean of Guild and a Governor of Robert Gordon's College amongst a number of appointments. With this history of connection to textiles, the Weaver Incorporation and Aberdeen, the Members of the Weaver Incorporation readily agreed to the establishment of the J Gray Kilgour Medal being awarded to the winner of the Career Enhancement Award. This first occurred in 2002 and the recipient was Nadia Ainslie. Today, the 26th recipient of the Career Enhancement Award and the 12th recipient of the J Gray Kilgour Medal has been named, Karen Runthal.

The wisdom of the decision to initiate the prize, confirmed by the high quality of winners and the new opportunities which it has opened up for them in the ever developing world of textiles, has been vindicated.

Ex Deacon Convener Graeme D. Nicol
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