

LIVING

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PERTH AND KINROSS

CUT TO THE CHASE

PRINTMAKER **LINDA M. FARQUHARSON** ON HER LOVE OF LINOCUT



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on her EarSass earrings*

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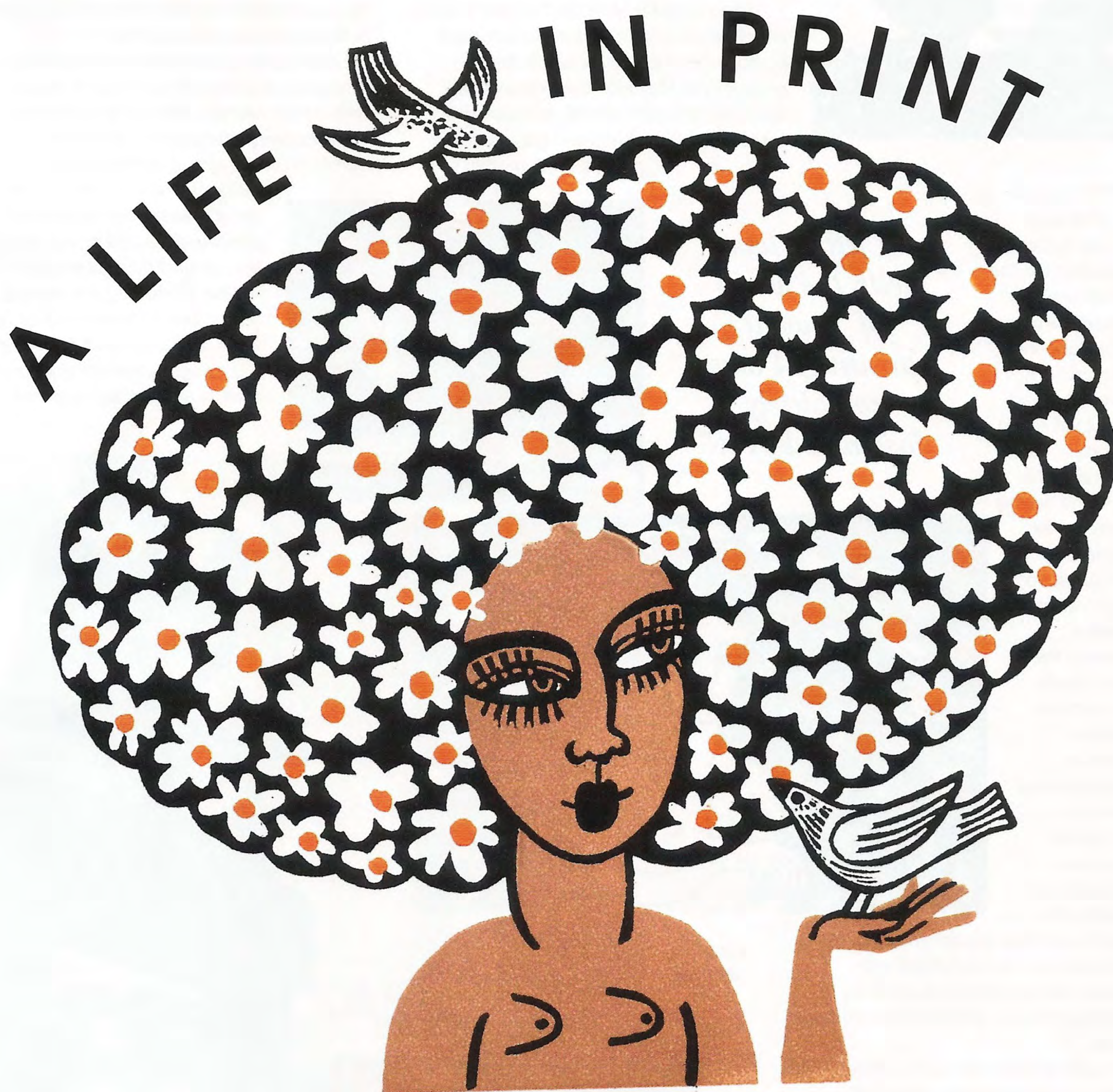
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From almost studying geography to designing award-winning stamps for Royal Mail, Linda Farquharson spoke to LIVING about her fascinating life as a printmaker.

By Anna Gunn



In her teenage years, Linda found her interest in pursuing art wasn't always encouraged by her teachers. Fortunately, her art teacher, Iain McIntosh, had other ideas.

"When I told Mr McIntosh I wanted to go to art school, he encouraged me to prepare a portfolio. I'd originally applied to study geography at Aberdeen University, which I knew wasn't what I wanted, so I went for it."

Linda was also championed by one of the patrons at her mother's

coffee shop in Montrose, renowned Scottish landscape artist James Morrison.

"Jimmy used to come into Mum's coffee shop, and he was always so very encouraging. His support definitely helped me on my way to fulfilling my dream of art school."

Linda moved to Dundee where she studied Illustration at Duncan of Jordanstone. It was here she discovered a lifelong love of linocut.

"It was a wonderful course where we learned all about various traditional print

making techniques. It really set me off into the world of linocut printing which I fell in love with. I was completely fascinated by it."

After graduating and winning the Sekalski Prize for Printmaking, Linda did some travelling before picking up her first commissioned work as an illustrator to create

WHEN linocut printmaker and illustrator Linda Farquharson lifts the tympan on her printing press and peels the paper from the lino block, she says it feels revelatory, waiting to see what each complete print will reveal.

Visiting Linda's stunningly rural studio near Dunkeld and hearing about her passion for printmaking feels revelatory in a way, too – and no less than an absolute delight.

Tucked behind the beautiful farmhouse Linda shares with her partner and two boisterous cocker spaniels, is her printing studio where she intricately cuts into linoleum to create linocuts to be printed.

Once a bothy, this space is utterly charming and dominated by Linda's pride-and-joy – an incredible hand-operated Columbian printing press, made by Clymer & Dickson around 1850 and restored by Linda in 1989.

"I'd been looking for one for quite a while, travelling around looking at ones when they became available," says Linda. "Then, this one came up. It needed quite a bit of restoration but has served me well for the past 30 years."

Born in Aberdeen, Linda grew up in Fettercairn, a small village at the foot of Cairn o'Mount. It was here she discovered her love for art and design.

"I grew up in a home where creativity was encouraged, whether that was baking with my mum or making things from scratch. We worked with our hands a lot so that was something that came very naturally to me."

"I fell in love with the world of linocut printing. I was completely fascinated by it"



Celebrating the female form





"I love to take a story and bring it to life through print. Even just a word provides inspiration"



the artwork for a series of posters for the Edinburgh Jazz Festival.

"They were up in bars and venues across the city. I kept seeing students stealing the posters to put up in their own accommodation wherever they were. I could never decide if that was a good or bad thing!"

Linda went on to spend 20 years living and working in Edinburgh, before moving to her Perthshire studio. In all that time, her linocut method hasn't changed.

"While the printmaking process hasn't really changed since the 1980s, the styles techniques and complexity of the printmaking I do has evolved and grown over time."

The linocut process is painstaking and intricate. Linda starts by drawing an image on the 'block' which is the linoleum. She then cuts the image, but everything that is cut out on the block will be white and the rest will be caught by the ink. Then she rolls ink on to the surface of the block, then lays the paper on top and adds pressure using her Columbian press.

"When you peel the paper off the block the image appears in reverse," Linda explains. "Everything is about working backwards."

When admiring Linda's prints in her studio, her work has a very distinctive and thought-provoking style. Also, without fail, each one tells a story in one form or another.

"I love to take a story and bring it to life through print. Sometimes its just a word or phrase that provides the inspiration."

In particular, Linda has created many prints inspired by nature

combined with the female form, playing to her fascination with Goddess Mythology. Works such as The Nine Maidens and Earth Goddess celebrate womanhood and the point where humans and nature merge – a theme Linda is passionate about.

As well as producing linocut prints, Linda runs workshops, sharing the methods she has perfected over three decades.

"It takes a bit of time for people to grasp the process at first but once they do people really surprise themselves. They're always absolutely delighted when they see their creations. It's a lovely joyous moment."

In the past few years, Linda was approached to be involved in a project which she still can't quite believe happened.

"I was contacted by an agency who were pitching to create stamps for Royal Mail. They asked if they could use my print Cherry Bird for their pitch.

"Once they got through the first round, they commissioned me to produce designs for a range of stamps called Romantic Poets."

The stamps featuring Linda's designs went into circulation in 2020 – at the height of the lockdown. The stars were clearly aligning as the stamps, featuring quotes from Wordsworth, Blake, Keats and Byron alongside Linda's linocuts, have a very comforting quality.

Linda went on to win an award for the stamps at the Fresh Awards 2020, something she is immensely proud of.

"It's ironic because there was a competition

to design stamps when I was at art school which was always pretty competitive. Never did I think I'd get the opportunity to design an actual range of Royal Mail stamps or be winning awards for the work. It's been a real privilege."

That's a word Linda uses a lot. She sees her ability to do what she loves every day and share it as a privilege.

Having been welcomed into her studio and seen Linda in her element producing such unique works of art, the privilege is all ours.

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Pics : ©Linda Farquharson

