in the FRAME



IMAGE BY MURRAY ORR

Based in Leith and founded by designer James Stevens and editor Hugo Macdonald, **BARD** is a studio and gallery for Scottish craft and design. Here, the couple share their design ethos and greatest influences

How has your style evolved? *James:* Since starting Bard, we've developed a better understanding of who makes the things we live with, how they are made and why. This means we can make informed choices, deeper than trends or aesthetics. When everything comes from something, somewhere or someone, and you know where and why that is, it feels personal.
Hugo: We are quite anti-style in that respect. Age brings greater self-awareness and unfettered confidence for personal expression, no doubt. We feel more defiant as individuals. More whole, more liberated.

Who or what are your biggest influences? *H:* We've been fortunate to work for and alongside some pioneering cultural figures who continue to inspire and mentor us: furniture designer Ilse Crawford, Maria Speake of Retrouvius, *Monocle* founder Tyler Brûlé, graphic designer Frith Kerr, creative director, Tony Chambers, fashion designer Erdem Moralioglu. What do they share? Care. An uncompromising commitment to their own vision and a tireless belief in quality.

Who is your design hero? *J:* The Immortals, of whom Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret Macdonald take the spotlight. As a group, they looked to the past to make something for the present that felt like the future, and still does.
H: Derek Jarman and Banjo Beale. What Banjo does on those budgets in those timescales is nothing short of miraculous.

What's your favourite building? *H:* We live in Edinburgh's Newhaven in the shadow of Chancelot Mill – I love it. Factory buildings in urban settings are so compelling. It's like a Bernd and Hilla Becher photograph. I long to see inside it.



Top James and Hugo founded Bard, which commissions and curates craft by Scottish makers, in 2022. Bard Studio also designs interiors, brands and experiences. **Above** James and Hugo eat ice-cream from LaKrista Morton's Harvest Moon bowls (£36 each) "most days"

J: At the other end of the spectrum, we were fortunate to live in Lamb's House in Leith while we were working on our own home. It's a fascinating merchant's house, built in 1610, that has been meticulously restored by historic architecture practice Groves-Raines.

Describe your dream home *J:* An old bothy that makes the most of its wildness and encourages self-sufficient living. It has an outdoor bath. It is on the north-west coast, most likely – and in our dream there are no midges.

What's your own home like? *H:* A work in progress. It's an early 18th-century tenement in Newhaven that lost its original interior when it was combined into one dwelling in the 1970s. James is in the process of refurbishing it, using only materials, objects and skills from Scotland, whether old or new.
J: It has been an exciting challenge that has taken us all over the country and islands, meeting hundreds of people in the process. We found our loo in a scrapyard on the Aberdeenshire coast. We cut down two Douglas firs on managed forestry in East ►

Lothian to make a staircase. We collected earth pigment from beaches and railway sidings to make our own paints. The aim is to create a home that is truly of and from Scotland.

What makes a home? *J:* Being surrounded by things that have meaning to you. People think our job is all about trend or taste, but we are dedicated to helping people fall in love with things on their own terms. We help people make homes that are chosen, not specified, that reflect the people who live in them.

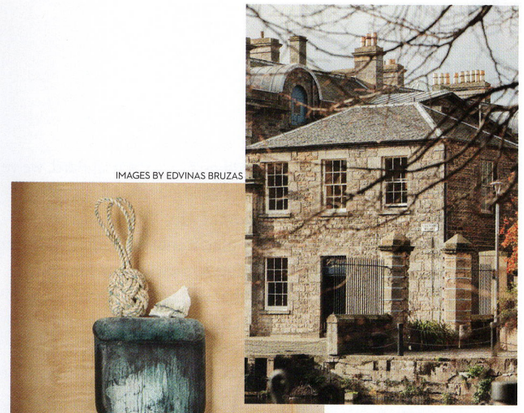
Tell us about an artist you love *H:* Orcadian artist Brandon Logan. We hosted a solo show of his work in collaboration with the Ingleby Gallery during the Edinburgh Art Festival last summer.
J: Andrew Radford [of Timberyard] has recently started showing the artworks he has made with waste material for the past decade. He stains, dyes and polishes card using coffee, tea and wine. I love seeing colour come from materiality and process.

What luxury item do you covet? *H:* Food is my luxury. CalMac ferry breakfasts; dinner at Inver, Gloriosa or Barry Fish. Warm, outrageously filled almond croissants from Boxwood Tam.
J: A kilt by Le Kilt, and a long bath with an open fire.

What should we be investing in right now? *J:* Craft. The work of living people, particularly, such as the straw-back chairmaker Eve Eunson.
H: Investing in craft isn't just quaint; the absence of a supply chain means it supports people and communities directly, and ensures skills and knowledge endure and evolve. The work of Gaada, the Shetland artist-led social enterprise, and Edinburgh's Garvald deserve great investment.



IMAGES BY EDVINAS BRUZAS





Above You'll find Bard at Customs Wharf, a distinctive Georgian building at Leith docks. It's open every Friday and Saturday.
Left An Orkney chair at Bard, with ceramicist James Rigler's Verdigris Corbel on the wall

Do you consider yourself a collector? *H:* Yes. I have a weakness for found natural ephemera, so maybe I'm better described as a hoarder. Or a wild thief.
J: Our home is a collection of Scottish materials, skills and objects. The restriction we set ourselves has meant we've built a home from what we could find, rather than filling it purely with stuff we like. It's a craft mentality of resourcefulness: start with the question of what you need, then answer with what you have.

Tell us about a recent discovery *H:* Ceramicist LaKrista Morton, whose deft forms and elemental glazes are transporting.
J: We are very excited about the Birnam Hotel in Dunkeld, due to open soon, which Kim Grant and Eric Bremner are bringing back to life with great imagination and huge integrity.

What's on the horizon for Bard? *H:* Bard Studio, our design consultancy, is in great demand. Alongside interiors and commissioning collections of craft for private and commercial clients, we are working on the design strategy for a hotel group, a chocolate brand and a textile manufacturer.
J: We will celebrate Bard's fourth anniversary later in the year with a group show called *Talismania*, exploring the talismanic power of craft, old and new, weird and wild.

What is Scotland's greatest attribute?
J: As an Englishman, I'd say the Scots.
H: As a Scot, I'd say macaroni pies and Sharleen Spiteri.