Patterns of Flora: Mapping Seven Raasay Habitats  
*Stephen Bungard*

In May 2014 I was contacted by Frances Priest, an artist and designer based in Edinburgh who was heading for Raasay and Skye to begin visual research into the native plant species of the area. This was to form the starting point for a new body of ceramic work that would explore ornamental motif and pattern inspired by the plant life of Raasay and Skye.

Shortly afterwards we met up for a day’s exploration of Raasay, and Skye soon disappeared off the wish list. After discussion of various possibilities such as traditional uses for local plants, we settled on seven different habitats as the subject of the work. Frances was commissioned by Atlas Arts, Portree for the work that became “Patterns of Flora | Mapping Seven Raasay Habitats”. ATLAS Arts was founded in 2010 to inspire public interest in contemporary visual arts and culture.

The selected habitats and plants are:

- **Moor**  
  *Blechnum spicant* (Hard Fern), *Erica tetralix* (Cross-leaved Heath), *Myrica gale* (Bog Myrtle), *Narthecium ossifragum* (Bog Asphodel), *Succisa pratensis* (Devil’s-bit Scabious)

- **Bog**  
The main period Frances had available for this work was during the winter when direct observation of the plants in their natural habitat was not possible, but with the help of images, drawings and the herbarium at RBGE, Frances was able to create seven beautiful designs [See photo inside back cover].

Raasay House was the selected centre with door furniture (door knobs and finger plates) and window-sill inlays becoming permanent features. Additionally, seven designs of Parian ware vase were designed, one for each habitat, plus adult colouring books featuring the seven habitats. Maps were created of walks on Raasay to each of the featured habitats and for that we were greatly helped by graphic artist Andy McGregor. The walks are of varying length and difficulty, all starting from Raasay House.

A shelf of botanical books was established in the Raasay House library where all the bookcases are newly adorned with doorknobs featuring Frances’ designs.

Frances and I were invited to appear on “Radio Scotland's premier arts programme” the Janice Forsyth Show and the project came second in the ‘Placemaking’ category of the Arts & Business Scotland Awards.
The project was launched at Raasay House in June 2015 with a weekend of activities including botanical walks to some of the habitats.

The vases and colouring books are on sale at Raasay House and from the online store at https://atlas-arts.myshopify.com/, though most vases have now been sold. The map of walks costs £1 and is also available as above.