

## ARTISTIC INSPIRATION ON SKYE

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My initial visit to the Island of Skye, on my self-made bicycle was in 1949. We arrived in a gale force 9 at the bottle-green-painted Norwegian-type Glen Brittle youth hostel; in such skirmish weather we tried to open the hostel door, but because of the strong wind I could not. So, knocking on the window hostellers came and pushed, helping the door to be open. The next day, Saturday the storm ceased a bit, and we knew that the fisherman from the Island of Soay, named Tex Guedes (this because once he was apparently in Texas) should come in a fishing vessel to take passengers from the head of Loch Brittle over sea direct to Mallaig. So, I with my friend waited a long time looking out seawards to the entrance to Loch Brittle, but no sign of a boat. Dismayed for the weather was still rough we cycled back up Glen Brittle partly even having to carry our bikes over the track to Sligachan! In those days one had to take the road which goes all the long way around the inner sides of Loch Ainort (the new shortcutting road was not then built). So eventually we reached wet through, the ferry over to Kyle of Lochalsh on the mainland. I read recently that if one gets wet on Skye this is dreadful, but to get wet through to the skin is marvellous!

Years elapsed, until in 1976 from the Sligachan Inn we climbed up the Fionn Corrie and over the pass a bit to the east of Bruach na Frithe, and down steeply into the Lota Corrie, me tearing the backside of my mountain breeches! -passing the Bloody Stone and over bog-moor on the western side of Glen Sligachan, back to the Inn. After this, I was a few times in Glen Brittle and at the Sligachan Inn. The most memorable memories are with my wife: Cecile of the viola's, staying once in a B+B and for last time on Skye in still bottle-green, newly furnished Glen Brittle SYHA, this in 2012. We walked up to Coire Lagan, traversing on the way the amazing debris, rock-chaos of deep orange and silver colouring, that shatters down the steep slope from Sgurr Dearg. The Coire is wild-riveted by rock faces, and gigantic "Torso"-like basalt rocks in its stone shoot are criss-crossed by pinkish veins. Descending direct to Loch Brittle, cascading water gushes its way downwards and I had the feeling that a giant of old had thrown down in mighty fury boulders valley-wards.

In earlier geological times the Red Cuillin were many times higher than the Black Cuillin--but ages of erosion and weather denudation has drastically lessened their heights. The Western Red Cuillin are formed of numerous intrusions; direct evidence that the normal granophyre is in contact with gabbro. The streaked appearance of these colourful mountains I relate to "strawberry-cream". The Black Cuillin gabbro mountains in e.g., Coire an Creiche depict many typical cone-sheets that cut the gabbro. Repeated gravitative concentration of olivine, with an upward migration of alkalis, accounts for rhythmic banding in the peridotite; a rock which on the Island of Rhum is found in extensive sheets for example on Barkeval with its southern cliffs built of the indigo-coloured rock. In a glass vitrine in Kinloch Castle there is or was a lump of peridotite together with a piece of rock from the moon; these two rocks are similar.

Especially during these week-long stays, I worked in the Black Cuillin and Red Cuillin in sketch books and watercolours; back at home in Switzerland many etchings were made; one in special is a "mad" depiction of the strawberry-cream" streaked Red Cuillin! My artistic works wish to convey the difference `twixt the Red Cuillin and the Black Cuillin on Skye (see the following page).

## RED CUILLIN Etching with cadmium red, natural pigment



## BLACK CUILLIN



Above: Sgurr Dearg over Sgurr Alistair to Sgurr Sgumain.  
 Below left: ink drawing of The Inaccessible Pinnacle of Sgurr Dearg.  
 Below right: watercolour of Sgurr Sgumain.