New Lanark became famous for its textiles and Robert Owen’s social agenda which embraced both education and sustainability. Docey Lewis, a direct descendant of Owen, based in New Harmony, Indiana, and a design and development expert, shares the story of the Full Circle programme for 3Form and putting together a community development project in the mountains of Nepal that combines the best of capitalism and social entrepreneurship using 17 and 18 century weaving and spinning skills for cutting edge 21st century use. She works with hundreds of weavers, spinners and paper makers to produce textiles and wall coverings for the interior design market.

Docey Lewis has worked for thirty-five years in over forty countries as a textile designer for commercial companies and international development organizations. She began her career in San Francisco as a weaver and yarn designer, developing fabrics for fashion and interiors. In the 80s Docey founded IMA Designs, a weaving factory and commercial design studio in the Philippines with a focus on natural fiber wall coverings. IMA expanded into gift and home wares when it opened a boutique at the Hyatt Hotel Baguio. Clients have included Christian Dior, Oleg Cassini, Silk Dynasty, Cowtan & Tout, Larsen, Maya Romanoff, 3Form, Donghia, Weitzner, Neiman-Marcus, Gump’s, Horchow and Sundance catalog. In 2000, Docey and colleague Rochelle Beck won the World Bank’s Development Marketplace competition ($250,000 cash award) for creating and implementing the Artisan Enterprise Network. Now based in New Harmony, Indiana, Docey and her son Owen are partners in a weaving and papermaking factory in Kathmandu, Nepal. Docey is the chief design consultant for 3form, Inc’s Full Circle product line, largely produced in Nepal. She has been a senior consultant to Aid to Artisans (ATA) since 1988, most recently working on organic cotton in Senegal and loom weaving in Mexico, and has served on its board as well as on the boards of Vital Edge Aid, and HandEye Fund (HEF). She is current chair of HEF’s Artisan Small Grants Committee. Docey established ATA’s Artisan Health & Safety initiative funded by the eBay Foundation, and is also working with the Hunter Douglas Charitable Endowment on Handmade Water, a project to clean up dye effluent created by village dyers. With her Nepali business partner, Lhakpa Sherpa, she initiated the Phaplu Monastery Project, a community development venture that includes organic agriculture, dairy, a papermaking studio, weaving workshop, monastery restoration, education program and a Himalayan bed and breakfast. Docey also runs a fair trade gallery in the historic district of New Harmony, Indiana and serves on the board of the Robert Lee Blaffer Foundation, chairing its Grants Committee.

The Robert Owen Commemoration Lecture forms a part of a wider series of talks happening at New Lanark. Full details available at www.newlanark.org