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www.brothersewing.co.uk

Ruthin Craft Centre, Gallery 2
25 November 2017 – 27 January 2018

NunoZokuScarves

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Draw it  Scan it  Convert it  Stitch it
from the editor

Embroidery magazine is quite possibly unique in terms of craft publishing. With the exception of the Second World War, when a shortage of paper and the war effort intervened, it has been published continuously for 85 years, which is an enormous feat for any magazine. I feel honoured to edit a title with such an established pedigree – and the thanks for our continuing longevity must go to you, our readers. This month we want to hear more about you, your work and your stories – and we’re calling out to budding writers too – take a look at p10 for details. If you’re looking for inspiration, you can read about two artists who’ve already reached out to us. This month both Emily Jo Gibbs (p16) and Paddy Hartley (p36) offer insights into new bodies of work that are on show in January (and in Paddy’s case throughout 2018). It is always fascinating to read about an artist’s journey in his or her own words, so why not make it your resolution to get in touch in 2018? We would love to hear from you, and who knows where it could lead? Whatever your plans for 2018 I wish you a Happy New Year and hope you continue to enjoy Embroidery magazine.

Embroidery

Embroidery magazine is published six times a year in January, March, May, July, September and November. It was first published in 1932 by the Embroiderers’ Guild and is read by textile professionals and enthusiasts around the world. The Guild has more than 22,000 members and magazine subscribers, 179 Branches and 54 Young Embroiderers’ groups. It is a registered charity (No. 234239) with a specialist library and museum collection of 7,000 items and it organises an annual programme of scholarships, exhibitions, events, workshops, lectures and tours.

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ON THE COVER: Caroline Bartlett, Full Circle (detail), 2016

PS... Take a one year subscription to embroidery and we’ll deliver each copy to your door free of charge!
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This is no ordinary DVD that merely teaches drawing. In this 3-Disc Set, Jan Beaney and Jean Littlejohn develop their mantra of 'The more you look, the more you see' into a creative process. They show you how to look, become aware of what attracts you, and then demonstrate how to record observations through several techniques including drawing, paper tearing and collage, and making marks. Jan and Jean demystify the challenge of choosing materials: Which paper? Pencils? Paints? Glue? What other media to use? They show you how to mix and use colour. Several exercises are suggested to develop your skills, encouraging you to experiment and expand your thinking, simplifying the creative process.

As ever, their style is gentle, fun and full of inspiration and guidance. An ideal DVD for those nervous about drawing and recording and for those who want help in seeing and then designing in all sorts of art forms.

UK price is £28.00 plus £1.75 p&p.
EMBROIDERY loves...

PREVIEW

HOME SWEET HOME

These embroidered houses were made by children, teenagers and adults as part of the AccessArt Village, a creative collaborative project set up by AccessArt with support from Appletons Wool, which ran throughout 2017 and is now on tour at venues around the UK. The challenge was simple: participants were encouraged to contribute a sewn drawing of their home as part of a co-created artwork. AccessArt received over 700 embroidered pictures from all over the world. Artist Andrea Butler and a team then transformed them into an inspiring installation piece (pictured), which made its debut at Farfield Mill last September. It tours next to Brentwood Gallery in Essex from 17-31 January, then Whitley Bay Library, Tyne and Wear.

www.accessart.org.uk/accessartvillage
Hanging loose

This month the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill on Sea reveals ‘Fantômas’, a new body of work by Caroline Achaintre. Her raw, energetically hand-tufted sculptures often resemble masks and take their inspiration from sources as diverse as fashion and Primitivism, as well as sub-cultures such as Goth-metal and psychedelia. The title of the exhibition refers to the mask worn by the French shape-shifting fictional criminal Fantômas who in a 1960s’ TV programme wore a blue mask to hide his face. For Achaintre, the mask is a place where fantasy and reality coexist, and she explores this dynamic in a fresh series of ceramics and wall hangings.

Caroline Achaintre
Fantômas is at the De La Warr Pavilion from 20 January to 29 April
www.dlwp.com

Opening at the end of the month at the National Centre for Craft and Design ‘Upholstery: Evolution to Revolution’ will focus on the development and radical change underway within craft upholstery in the UK.

The show is curated by Second Sitters, better known as Hannah Stanton and Jude Dennis, practicing upholsterers who promote independent upholstery through publications, exhibitions and education. Their NCCD show will encompass furniture, film and photography that tackle the subjects of activism, materiality, social commentary and throwaway culture.

Upholstery: Evolution to Revolution is at NCCD from January 27-April 15
nationalcraftanddesign.org.uk

Contemporary Textiles Fair

The artist Debbie Lyddon is due to exhibit ‘Liminal Objects’ (pictured) during the Contemporary Textiles Fair at Landmark Arts Centre in March. A diverse range of designer-makers showing a stunning array of distinctive and colourful textiles will join her. Richly embellished embroidery, hand-dipped shibori, ecoprints and naturally dyed artworks will be on show alongside contemporary homewares, sumptuous silks and hand woven scarves. And, in addition, a new section has been added to the fair this year called ‘Raw Fibres’ that will promote the work of new textile artists and recent graduates.

The Contemporary Textiles Fair is at the Landmark Arts Centre from 16-18 March 2018
www.landmarkartscentre.org

ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY?

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www.landmarkartscentre.org
Celebrating Womanhood in stitch

Embroiderer Louise Gardiner has joined forces with Pukka Herbs as the company’s creative ambassador for its Womankind range of Ayurvedic herbs and teas. The focal point of the campaign is a stunning cape embroidered by Louise that celebrates the feminine and the healing power of plants.

Working closely with Sebastian, Pukka’s master herbsmith, Louise learned about the therapeutic properties of various herbs and plants. She then selected 21 of these ingredients, incorporating their imagery into her final design.

The cape was unveiled in November and will travel to Germany in spring before being auctioned for Womankind Worldwide – a charity working regionally and globally to ensure women’s voices are heard, their rights realised and their lives are free from violence.

lougardiner.co.uk

Anne Morrell’s solo exhibition, Chasing Tensions, opens on 19 January 6-8pm then Wed-Fri 11-5 until 16 March at Goldsmiths’ Constance Howard Gallery.

www.gold.ac.uk/textile-collection/

Don’t miss ‘Daughters of Penelope’ at Dovecot Studios, examining key women weavers and artists who contributed to the tapestry studio. Until 20 January.

dovecotstudios.com

Trip to the End of the World is an exhibition of quilts at Farfield Mill – the only UK venue for this showcase of work by 38 selected artists. On show until 4 March.

farfieldmill.org

Usher in a new season with a visit to The Spring Knitting & Stitching Show at Olympia 1-4 March and see work by Dionne Swift’s students in the Collective Stitches gallery.

theknittingandstitchingshow.com

January

1

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Woman’s Hour Craft Prize finalist Celia Pym leads a mending day on Saturday 6 January 2018. Take along a garment to be mended.

vam.ac.uk

19

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www.gold.ac.uk/textile-collection/

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February

January February 2018

EMBROIDERY

Usher in a new season with a visit to The Spring Knitting & Stitching Show at Olympia 1-4 March and see work by Dionne Swift’s students in the Collective Stitches gallery.

theknittingandstitchingshow.com
CONTRIBUTORS
WRITE FOR US
We publish articles on all aspects of embroidery and stitch-related textiles – both contemporary and historical, at home in the UK and further afield – and we welcome ideas for evergreen articles and features about these subjects, as well as artist’s profiles. Please take a look at our back issues and familiarize yourself with our style and the subjects we cover. Email johalleditor@gmail.com with your idea.

READERS
SHARE YOUR WORK
If you are an artist, maker, designer, student or keen enthusiast and would like to see your work in Embroidery, please email embroideryeditor@embroiderersguild.com with a short bio and statement about your work, along with three low-res images and a link to your website. Take your time to let us know how your work fits into Embroidery and why we should feature you. Please note we work a long way in advance of our deadlines and receive a lot of submissions and we will reply to you as soon as we can.

ABOUT EMBROIDERY
Embroidery is the only magazine dedicated to embroidery and art textiles; every issue is packed with interviews, news, reviews and trends – we talk to the artists, stitchers and designers who matter.

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or purchase a digital copy of the magazine at www.pocketmags.com by searching for Embroidery magazine on the app.
The term ‘kissing the shuttle’ describes how mill weavers would use their mouths to pull the thread through the eye of the shuttle once the pirn (the bobbin) was replaced. It is also the title of an exhibition of colourful original works by Caitlin Hinshelwood currently on show in Camden.

Hinshelwood researched the customs and traditions that developed amidst the harsh working environments of the textile mills in the North of England and Northern Ireland. The resulting collection of silk banners references this folklore through symbols, slogans and embellishments such as ribbons and rosettes, hinting at the rituals, community identities and camaraderie that became intrinsically tied to work and the industrial workplace.

Kissing the Shuttle is at Cecil Sharp House, London until January 28

wwwcecilsharphouse.org
THE FOUR LETTERS NUNO are catnip for textile lovers. Nuno make Japanese textiles at their most intriguing and best – so tactile and moreish. And, hurray, there is a new exhibition of Nuno scarves at Ruthin Craft Gallery in Wales called ‘NunoZokuScarves’, on until 27 January. Although Ruthin Craft Gallery isn’t easy to get to, for those who make the pilgrimage the reward is some of the best craft exhibitions in the country. Nuno have had an exhibition there before: ‘Zoku Zoku’ in 2012. This return visit marks both the start of Nuno’s 35th anniversary year and their first collaboration with British textile designer and curator Gregory Parsons, who himself has a long history of working with Ruthin. Nuno was co-founded in Japan by Reiko Sudo in 1984. Their textiles have been exhibited all over the world and several beautifully formed books have been published. These are textiles that were early on recognised for their craftsmanship and design innovation as well as being just, well, beautiful. This exhibition concentrates on textiles woven at the Hyodo Orimono workshop in Kiryū, which Nuno acquired in 2016. The workshop specialises in jacquard weaving silk obi sashes – part of traditional Japanese dress. The looms that weave those sashes also – with a nice bit of textile propinquity – are exactly the right width for a scarf. Although the process is time consuming, as designs have to be transferred to punch cards, the results are as close to hand woven as can be. And instead of the usual two unfinished edges, this method gives four or even six edges, allowing openings and pockets and the additions of other fabrics: something Reiko Sudo calls ‘textile acrobatics’. Scarves are the textiles we chose to wear. They are small personal party political broadcasts of sartorial taste: we might take a few more risks with a scarf purchase than we would with a whole outfit. And for those who hanker after some measure of futuristic Japanese textile, this exhibition is the place to satisfy that urge. Of course these textiles look equally good hung on the wall as art. Yet nothing is a nice as watching textiles move on the body; the twists and turns of yarns, pleats, colours and patterns as they catch the light.

Seeing Nuno textiles gathered together in this country is a lesser-spotted thing. Look Ruthin up on the map and experience a rare treat for the eyes, why don’t you? Jane Audas

NunoZokuScarves is on show at Ruthin Craft Centre until 27 January 2018

ruthincraftcentre.org.uk
SONGS FOR WINTER

Each year Pauline Burbidge and Charlie Poulsen open up the home and farm buildings where they’ve lived for the last 24 years, as part of a unique four-day open studio event. Now their latest exhibition brings the spirit of that event to the gallery. ‘Songs for Winter’ will feature Burbidge’s large-scale contemporary quilted works, which reflect upon the natural world and landscape, alongside Poulsen’s sculptures and drawings.

Songs for Winter is at City Art Centre, Edinburgh until 4 March 2018
edinburghmuseums.org.uk

Church work

A pair of textile artists completed a series of embroidery commissions for St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast, Northern Ireland at the end of last year – a project that took them five years to complete.

Wilma Kirkpatrick and Helen O’Hare were initially commissioned by the The-then Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann in 2012 and, since then, have designed and completed 24 stoles, four burses, four veils and four pulpit falls.

The stoles are fashioned from Irish linen to complement the cathedral’s existing vestments. They are appliquéd with hand-dyed silk velvet and hand embroidered in running, seeding and cross stitch, along with digital embroidery. The design was a collaborative work, with Helen completing the handwork and Wilma the machine stitching.

Perspectives on Pattern

Bankfield Museum opens a new gallery next month called The Link, which will be celebrated by two exhibitions. For the first time the Museum will display examples from Calderdale Museums’ Pattern Book Collection. The collection is comprised of fabric samples, most of which were manufactured in Halifax and Calderdale. For locals whose ancestors worked in the mills the collection is a visual record of their heritage.

The Textile Art Group (TAG) will mount an exhibition of new works in response to the archive. TAG, which meets monthly at the Museum, viewed and sketched its holdings, examining 19th century artefacts and costumes, and each member has produced work directly inspired by the lives, experiences and practices around mill life.

Perspectives on Pattern is at Bankfield Museum from 10 February-2 June 2018
museums.calderdale.gov.uk/visit/bankfield-museum

Denise Teed, Gone Home – Exhausted Again
Designs on textiles

Following the shock election of Donald Trump last year, Aram Han Sifuentes, a textile-based community artist, began making protest banners in her Chicago apartment. This quickly evolved into The Protest Banner Lending Library, a space where people could learn the skills needed to make their own banners. It also acted as a communal space where people could see, talk and sense solidarity, and soon grew into an archive of lending banners that could be used and re-used.

Sifuentes’ Library is just one of the projects within the broad range of nominees for the prestigious Beazley Designs of the Year 2017 on show at the Design Museum. Now in its 10th year, the award spans six design categories: products, transport, graphics, fashion, digital and architecture. This year, the theme of activism and protest resonated through many of the categories – with textiles playing their part.

Amongst the textile related nominees is the original Pussyhat. The idea started as a small project among friends at the Little Knittery in Atwater village but soon turned into a global affair, as women were galvanized to knit their own Pussyhat and wear it in the streets as a sign of protest and solidarity at women’s marches around the world.

Also in the graphics category is the flag for The Refugee Nation, which was designed for a team of ten refugees competing in the Rio Olympics. Designed by Syrian artist and refugee Yara Said, the flag is vivid orange with a single black stripe, having taken its colour scheme from the lifejackets worn by refugees.

Each of these projects joins others nominated for their outstanding contribution to design and ability to capture the spirit of the times. The public vote opened online in October and the judges will announce the winners this month.
Winter may be here but one bright spot in the calendar is the post New Year celebration of excellence in contemporary craft that is COLLECT. Returning to the Saatchi Gallery with its 14th edition, this year promises much with 38 galleries showing work by UK and international makers and, excitingly, a strong representation of textile makers in Collect Open, the most experimental part of the show.

Fast establishing itself as an important feature, Collect Open supports innovative craft, championing concept-driven objects and exploratory installations. Twelve makers have been selected to take part, five of whom represent textiles, among them Emily Jo Gibbs, whose recent practice has focused on stitched portraits, a subject she’s expanded further in a fresh series of seven embroidered portraits of contemporary craft makers depicted through the tools they use.

‘The starting point for this work began whilst working on a collaborative project with [textile artist] Bridget Bailey in 2016, exploring the idea of portraits and looking at depicting the person through their workspace and tools. The pincushion is a vital tool if you are working in textiles; they are often beautifully made in tiny needlepoint. I was interested how I would represent stitch with stitch but also how in doing so, I imbued the already lovely object with greater reverence.

‘When you make a portrait and there is a recognisable likeness, it is really exciting for the viewer who knows the person. When Bridget saw her pincushion portrait, she had this same frisson of recognition. There is a very personal connection between a maker and their tools.’

Before she started, Gibbs was interested in which tools makers valued and why, and intent on stitching ‘the different materials and the wear and repair and modification’. They might choose hand tools or power tools, I was interested in the whole gambit and the variety.’

‘I went to visit Maiko Dawson at her South London Studio back in the summer; she is based in the brilliantly named Elephant Hotel. When I got there she had laid out all her tools for me. I was presented with neat rows of scissors, knives, hammers and pliers. Some things were really familiar but there were also a myriad of intriguing tools. Maiko makes all kinds of leather goods; I was particularly interested in her shoe making. My original intention for this project was to depict each maker through an individual tool: his or her favourite most important tool. But on visiting the makers I have been so excited and inspired by the range of tools they use that the work has become much more ambitious.

‘I took loads and loads of photographs of different tools in different combinations and we talked about what they were used for. Maiko also has a variety of exciting machines that I photographed. We discussed Japanese knife and scissor makers and how you can tell a good pair by the sound they make. Maiko also told me about the decline in British shoe last manufacturers; apparently there is only one left.

‘I wanted the portrait of Maiko to reflect the lovely colours she uses in her work and also the clean, crisp quality of her designs. In the end the composition includes a last, a hammer with an extraordinarily long head, the Japanese blades and a lovely ziggy-zaggy tool for removing nails.’

Gibbs has responded honestly to each maker, following their lead in order to ‘celebrate manual labour, the making of things, skill and craft, the makers and doers’.

Before she visited the studio of furniture maker Sebastian Cox, Gibbs thought she would leave with pictures of saws and planes but he was keen that his work shouldn’t be romanticised. ‘His favourite tool was a hand-held power tool that cut joints – joints that would be invisible once the furniture was constructed – and he spoke passionately about not charging clients for hand cutting joints that wouldn’t be seen. He was also really keen to show me his computer numeric control machine that they use for big bespoke projects. This machine threw up all kinds of interesting questions about a maker’s practice and was irresistible as a subject.’

Collect Open provided the impetus to make this series into a cohesive body of work, says Gibbs, who hopes the work will spark conversation about the value of makers and making.’

We couldn’t agree more.

www.emilyjogibbs.co.uk

Collect 2018 opens at the Saatchi Gallery 22-25 February. Textile makers showing alongside Emily in Collect Open are Forest + Found, Hannah Robson, Jilly Edwards and West Dean Tapestry Studio. Tickets from £16

collect2018.org.uk
46 x 45cm. Hand stitched silk organza on linen

Precision Portrait – Bridget, 2016.
21 x 27cm. Hand stitched silk organza on linen

Precision Portrait – Emily, 2016.
21 x 27cm. Hand stitched silk organza on linen
AWARDS

WORLD OF WEARABLEART

Five UK designers have won awards at the prestigious international World of WearableArt™ Awards in Wellington, New Zealand. The 2017 show featured 104 finalist garments by 122 designers from 13 countries, all competing for 37 awards. In the end 36 designers from nine countries took home prizes. The UK winners were: The Spirit of Waitomo by Maria Tsopanaki & Dimitri Mavinis (London) placed first in the Illumination Illusion Float, Fly, Flow section; The Red Section first place went to Cube by Adam McAlavey (London), who was also given the Cirque Du Soleil Invited Artisan Award for outstanding use of new techniques or technologies. Runner-up in the First Time Entrant Award was Existence by Alina Stanila (Reading); whilst the International Award for best entry from Europe went to Angel of a Different Kind by Liam Brandon Murray (Derby). The Supreme WOW® Award, given to the garment considered to be the most exceptional overall went to Encapsulate by Rinaldy Yunardi (Indonesia); the runner-up was Refuse Refuge by Grace DuVal (United States).

WOW®, the world’s leading wearable art design competition, is now in its 29th year. The rules state that anything that is wearable can find a place on stage, as long as it is original, innovative and well made. It attracts entries from some of the most creative designers and artists from in the world, as well as students and first time enthusiasts. The entries are all worn by performers as part of a stunning stage show, before being exhibited at the National WOW® Museum in Nelson.

Anyone wishing to enter the 2018 competition must register and upload images of their completed garments for pre-selection by the deadline of 28 March 2018.

www.worldofwearableart.com
The art of fashion

Katerina Rumiantseva is a 27-year-old fashion designer and embroidery artist living and working in Moscow. Together with her colleagues Olga and Svetlana, she founded the fashion label Aliz Arin.

‘I first became interested in embroidery about two years ago. It fascinated me so much that I couldn’t get it off my mind. Soon it occupied all my time.

‘I want to be innovative in my approach. I develop my own designs and have learned various embroidery techniques – goldwork, white dressing (or pearl embroidery) and tambour work. I like to combine these with other techniques. I really enjoy creating new textures and experimenting with colour and materials.

‘There are two main themes in my work. Botany is the main influence behind Aliz Arin’s ‘Herbarium A’ collection. When travelling, I collect herbaria and love to visit botanical gardens around the world.

‘The other theme is making, which I explored in Aliz Arin’s fashion collection ‘Sonnet 24’, so named because it is machine embroidered with lines from this Shakespeare sonnet, which speaks of the beauty of the creative process.

‘My latest work explores this theme and is really symbolic for me. It’s inspired by artists’ studios. This piece (pictured) is about the artist-muralist Sophia Kievskaia. I used a dress apron from the Sonnet 24 collection and hand embroidered it with brushes and brush strokes, using goldwork and tambour beading. It’s a prototype for artisans – working clothing embellished with the tools of their trade. To me, the workshop is my friend and the best place to find myself. It’s where I’m free to organise everything in accordance with my thoughts – a place of creation, a place of love – where I fall in love with the people who surround me.’

alizarin.fashion
a new year a new start

Traditionally January is the month most associated with new beginnings. So what better time to try a fresh approach, establish new habits or push your practice further? Here’s our A-Z of ideas and things to do to get your creative juices flowing. Happy New Year!

ARTIST’S DATE
In her classic book The Artist’s Way, author Julia Cameron champions the ritual of an artist’s date each week – making a date with yourself to visit to a museum or inspirational place, which should be free from the obligation to produce work and undertaken purely for inspiration.

The Artist’s Way
A Course in Discovering and Recovering Your Creative Self
Pan Macmillan
£16.99

BURSARIES AND AWARDS can support you in making new work. The Textile Society offers a range of awards; the Embroiderers’ Guild offers three annual scholarships, as well as the Beryl Dean Award for teaching embroidery (deadline 2 Feb) each worth £1,000; and the School of Stitched Textiles is offering two student bursaries (deadline 8 Jan).
textilesociety.org.uk  embroiderersguild.com  sofst.org

CRAFT CENTRES
often provide vital resources for artists and makers, not only exhibitions but studios, workshops and talks, as well as professional opportunities.
nationalcraftanddesign.org.uk
bluecoatdisplaycentre.com
ruthincraftcentre.org.uk
harleygallery.co.uk

DISTANCE LEARNING
Home study courses like those offered by the Embroiderers’ Guild (short project-based courses £45 members/£60 non-members; longer courses of 30+ hours £240/£280) allow you to study at your own pace. Find out what’s on offer via the website or email elearningdirect@embroiderersguild.com for more information.
embroiderersguild.com

2018 is shaping up to be a bumper year for textile exhibitions. Already several major shows have been announced including Anne Morrell’s Chasing Tensions at Constance Howard Gallery, Goldsmiths, London (January); Frida Kahlo’s Wardrobe at the V&A (June); The 62 Group at Mac, Birmingham (July); and Alice Kettle’s Thread Bearing Witness (October) at The Whitworth, Manchester.

Karen Nicol in Ruthin Craft Centre’s The Wit of the Stitch, 2016

Karen Nicol in Ruthin Craft Centre’s The Wit of the Stitch, 2016

Frida Kahlo, Self Portrait with Red and Gold Dress, 1941

©Gerardo Suter The Jacques & Natasha Gelman Colln C20th Mexican Art & the Vergel Foundation
FRIENDS can be your biggest source of inspiration and motivation, and the idea of group textile exhibitions is as popular as ever. In their book (left) Cas Holmes and Anne Kelly offer advice on how to begin collaborating creatively, either with a pal or by setting up a group, and offer a wealth of practical and creative advice, with exercises to get you started.

Connected Cloth: Creating Collaborative Textile Projects
Batsford £19.99
pavilionbooks.com

IN a need of a little support? Or want to find a group of fellow stitchers? Why not join a branch of The Embroiderers’ Guild. If you want to stretch your practice further and are looking for the next move, there are also number of exhibiting groups in the UK. Among the best known are:

@embroiderersguild.co.uk
arttextilesmadeinbritain.co.uk
embroiderersguild.com
prismtextiles.co.uk
textilestudygroup.co.uk

INSTAGRAM CHALLENGE

Partner up with other textile folk and decide on a subject for a motivational Instagram challenge. Select a good hashtag and a time length to run it and invite others to take part. Then follow up on your blog. Read about Louise Gardiner’s #stitchcloud challenge under the projects tab on her website.
lougardiner.co.uk

GROUPS AND GUILDS

Textile collections and historical archives are a rich source of information and inspiration for artists. The Embroiderers’ Guild, The RSN and the V&A all hold important collections of textiles, and many local museums and country houses have archives too. Enjoy our list of the best in our A-Z of textile collections in the Jan/Feb 2014 edition of Embroidery magazine.

Journals & sketchbooks

Jan Beaney and Jean Littlejohn’s latest DVD shows even the most nervous drawers how to begin by looking closely and becoming aware of what attracts you. They then demonstrate how to record your observations through drawing, painting, collage and making marks.

Interpretations: Look, Record, Draw
(five hours of video instruction on three DVDs) £28 plus p&p
doubletrouble-ent.com

HISTORICAL ARCHIVES

BATSFORD ©V&A MUSEUM

©C GERARDO SUTER THE JACQUES & NATASHA GELMAN COLLN C20TH MEXICAN ART & THE VERGEL FOUNDATION
THE KNITTING & STITCHING SHOW is not just an excuse to stock up on your stash but has become an unmissable event thanks to the range of talks, workshops, and its unique textile galleries. Forthcoming highlights at Olympia include shows by Anne Kelly, Mr X Stitch, Kate Whitehead and Dionne Swift’s students.

Spring K&S Show 1-4 March
theknittingandstitchingshow.com

If you want to record the world in a unique way, you’d better improve your powers of observation. On Looking: Eleven Walks with Expert Eyes by Alexandra Horowitz reveals how little we really see. She walked a city block with eleven different experts (among them an artist, a geologist and a naturalist) in this charming and inspiring read that will make you view the world differently.

Simon & Schuster UK £12.99
simonandschuster.co.uk

Conferences such as the forthcoming Textile and Place symposium being hosted by Manchester School of Art and The Whitworth (12 April) present an opportunity to meet other textile practitioners face to face. The European Textile Network also stages well attended conferences in European cities.

textileandplace.co.uk
etn-net.org

Online study is an ideal way to learn new skills if you can’t find the right course locally. Check out the embroidery, devoré and drawing courses offered by Dionne Swift
dionneswift.co.uk

Competitions can be a great way to add a new challenge to your creative output. The annual Hand & Lock Prize rewards the most creative application of hand embroidery (and now digital embroidery) with prestige and prize money to match.

handembroidery.com/the-prize

A masterclass can take your skills to another level. Learn haute couture techniques and traditional embroidery with Hand & Lock. Or study with Elizabeth Roulleau Gasbarre in France on a seven week intensive masterclass: handembroidery.com/elisabethroulleau.com/en

Jin Kim 1st Prize Hand & Lock Fashion Student Category, 2016

Jasmin Mupur, Unity of the Untitled, 2017

Residencies offer creative people essential time away from the pressures of everyday life, often in a unique cultural setting. The Harley Studios host resident artists, who are given an opportunity to experience working at Welbeck for between one week and one year. Check out other opportunities at

artinfo.theharley.org/artist-opportunities

Michael Brennand-Wood undertook a six-month residency at The Harley Gallery in 2003, culminating in the touring exhibition ‘A Field of Centres’
The Textile Study Group’s annual summer school is tutored by members but open to everyone and takes place in Derbyshire this year from 23-26 July. Meanwhile The Bath Textile Summer School runs from 20-24 August with workshops on offer from Wendy Dolan, Isobel Hall, Jenny Adin Christie and Janet Bolton (pictured). textilestudygroup.co.uk/courses/summer-school-2018

TRAVEL broadens the mind, especially if you head off to a creative retreat. Val Holmes specialises in textile workshops in south west France, including machine embroidery & embellishing (4-10 March & 23-29 September), collagrophy for textile artists (15-21 April) and a dying school (27 May-2 June) amongst others. textile-art-centre.com.fr

You don’t have to be an undergrad to take advantage of the learning opportunities in our universities. Many offer creative short courses. Amongst those at Nottingham Trent is a one-week natural dye workshop (13-17 August £695). In the capital there’s a five-week introduction to embroidery (27 January £560) at Central St Martins, or try a beginner’s five-day embroidery, embellishment and appliqué course at London College of Fashion (23 July £495). www4.ntu.ac.uk arts.ac.uk/csm arts.ac.uk

SET UP A WORKSHOP at home or improve your existing studio with top tips from The Textile Artist’s Studio Handbook by Visnja Popovic. She provides advice on the best set-ups whether working with fibres, dyes, threads or paints, and includes tutorials on all these techniques. Quarry Books £16.99 quartoknows.com

The net brings subjects to life thanks to the ever-increasing popularity of video. Not sure how a Cornely embroidery machine works? Interested in raised embroidery from the 1600s? Couldn’t get to the Rijswijk Textile Biennial 2017? You Tube is your friend.GUARTY

x FACTOR is perhaps best described as the unique way in which you express yourself. Everyone is different and your work should be too. Search regularly beyond the textile world as to what truly interests you and never imitate – always originate. Always keep your horizons broad. Zoë Hillyard’s blogpost on her website says it best. zoehillyard.blogspot.co.uk/2016/06/creative-integrity

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Z ZONE Get in the zone – that place where time stands still whilst you’re absorbed by what you’re doing. In writing about a reflective practice in Slow Stitch, artist Claire Wellesley-Smith suggests starting a daily stitch journal like the one pictured. Slow Stitch: Mindful and Contemplative Textile Art Batsford £22.50 pavilionbooks.com
Sensory memory

Caroline Bartlett works beyond the surface of the textile, using it as a means to articulate ideas about historical, social and cultural associations and life’s journey.
I’ve been reflecting on what it is that particularly interests me: it comes down to how we record memory. So explains Caroline Bartlett in our discussion about her practice. It makes me ponder my own memories of the artist’s work and, in particular, my first encounter with her early pleated pieces in a group exhibition at Bankfield Museum.

In the two decades since, her work has varied in form, material and scale yet its feel, the memory of the artist’s making, has remained constant. There is always that sense of restraint: of something considered, an idea thought through and meticulously expressed. These are not works that scream for attention but rather ones that ineluctably draw it from the viewer by their quiet, assured presence. Bartlett’s practice asks something of us: it asks us to look and listen, and then to reflect on what we have seen and heard. This is the very stuff of memory and it is a process evoked by the qualities of the artist’s making.

Although textiles are integral to Bartlett’s practice, they were not initially on her creative radar. ‘I don’t think I’d any idea about working in textiles when I started out. I thought I’d be a designer,’ she explains. It was during her foundation year at college when an interest in textiles began to grow and she enrolled at Central School of Art and Design to study textile design. After graduating, she worked as a freelance textile designer and then for...
I came to realise that it was in the physical tactility of surface that interested me, not just the visual appearance.
a commission printing company. ‘I’m well versed in repeat work and printing to commercial standards,’ she continues. It is a knowledge that she has put to good use in her artwork, combining print with stitch and drawing, on the associations of repetition with memory. Print itself, however, was not to be the career for Bartlett. ‘The designs then were of flat painted gouaches. I came to realise that it was in the physical tactility of surface that interested me, not just the visual appearance.’ There was more to explore and the opportunity to do so came via a Postgraduate Diploma of Textiles at Goldsmiths College where she was encouraged to break rules in her making. ‘It was a revelation. The course at Central had been very regulated and Goldsmiths began to challenge my thinking and made me question what my work was about.’ Although her thinking evolved further during a subsequent MA in Public Art at Chelsea School of Art, it is her time at Goldsmiths that Bartlett sees as pivotal to the development of her interest in pleating, textured layers, stitched surfaces and restrained palettes. She recalls travels in Africa and Asia and there are resonances in her emerging work of both Japanese aesthetics and Chinese textiles, in particular the circular resist-dyed and pleated skirts of the Hmong. If these were echoes of personal memories, then it was entirely apt for it was memory itself – the potential of cloth as a vehicle to carry and communicate that memory – that has become the focus of her subsequent work. Allied to this is a parallel interest in the influence places and collections exert on our shared memories. ‘I’m interested in the role museums, archives and historic sites play in determining individual and collective memories – of histories written, erased and overwritten.’ This has led to Bartlett being involved in numerous site and collection related projects. Having begun with a piece in response...
to Leighton House (1999), her next venture involved creating a land piece in the Abbey Gardens on the site of the library of the former monastery at Bury St Edmunds for Art Textiles (2000). ‘Codices was my first major piece and was about issues of erasure. Taking words from the Rule of the Benedictine Order, I digitised them – partially removing some – and then stitched them into the grass with the idea that they would be erased when the grass grew. I had been very taken with the abbey’s educational function – prior to the Reformation there was a school and library there – and the important role the monks had as keepers of knowledge. That all changed with the advent of printing, the translation of the Bible from Latin into English and the destruction of the site during the Reformation. Codices was my response to that sense of shifting histories – of knowledge hidden and lost.’

Two other major works followed in 2002/3, first Bodies of Knowledge Volume 5: Arbiters of Taste for the V&A, then Conversation Pieces for the Whitworth. The former offered a critique of collecting by focusing on a group of Art Nouveau chairs controversially donated to the V&A in 1900, then reviled by critics and now acknowledged masterpieces. The latter explored hidden aspects of an archive, in particular the work of conservators. Bartlett states Listening in was inspired by a quote by Susan Stewart in From the Museum of Touch, which suggests that objects in museums act as a cache of our labour and maintaining them is a way of postponing the effects of time. In preserving works of art out of reach, they become symbolic repositories of the touch and care instilled in them by their makers and conservators. Common to both these collection-based pieces was the use of embroidery rings, silk crepeline and shadows. It is a way of working that Bartlett has continued to develop, with the rings emerging again, this time with woollen cloth and porcelain in Stilled for Cloth and Memory (2) at Salts Mill (2013). ‘That was the project that’s pushed my practice most. I was very drawn to a recess within the huge space and also to the smell of the place; the senses always interest me and the walls there seemed to seep wool. When I’m looking to make a piece like this, I’m trying to see the right spot, something that resonates with me.’
In recent years, Bartlett has begun to stitch under the surface of the cloth, a reference to her interest in the relationship of cloth to skin. Some of this work emerged out of her having to travel back and forth to Dorset caring for her father. ‘Print was too difficult time-wise so I had to find new ways of working. I came upon the idea of archiving my work by digitally scanning, manipulating and redrawing lines. Then stitching by skimming under the skin of the cloth.’ The result is Surrogates and Backwards, Forwards, which when we speak are about to be sent to Uruguay for the VII World Textile Art Biennale, along with two other pieces Pulse and Full Circle. The return to a circle of pleats in the latter works is both striking and apposite. ‘John Berger talks about life’s experiences folding backwards and forwards on themselves and this notion has resonated with me in the development of processes and ideas. A few things have driven my work in recent years but essentially life’s journey is the major influence; experiences and interactions that permeate into my sphere of reference.’ We end, as we began, contemplating memory.

June Hill

carolinebartlett.co.uk

1 Stewart, Susan ‘From the Museum of Touch’ Material Memories ed. by Maria Keent, Christopher Beweward, Jeremy Aynsley (Oxford Berg, 1999) p17-36
Back to the future

In repurposing old embroideries and household linens, Alexandra Drenth gives a voice to the past and the emotions and memories entrusted within their once treasured threads.

‘EMBROIDERY IS ESSENTIALLY a personal art,’ wrote Walter Crane in 1899. In Amsterdam North, the most rural part of the Netherlands’ capital city, lies the residence of the Dutch modern day embroiderer Alexandra Drenth, to whom Crane’s words surely apply.

Drenth became involved with embroidery in 2007, whilst working as photographer. The large project she photographed fascinated her, as did her interest in the possibilities of textiles. Later the same year she placed an advert in a local newspaper asking for old embroidery linens to help raise funds for the charity Mamma Cash. This organisation defends the rights of girls, women and transgender people worldwide. Forgotten labours of love, long stacked away in attics and closets after people had lost interest in them, were sent to her in abundance – a total of 185 square meters of embroidered cloth. In the end she produced 27 wall hangings from them, which were auctioned off in aid of the good cause. But even when the auction was over and done with, people were still sending her embroideries. Each one had its own story to tell about illness and grief, or happy occasions like birth and marriage. And it was this – the past expression of the inner feelings of women – that became the basis of Drenth’s work.

As many of the pieces were old, most had acquired stains or holes. Drenth decided to cut into the old textiles and recycle them in an artful way. Beautiful tiny embroidered snapshots from the past found a new life when stitched onto shirts, coats, capes and even a chasuble.

Behind Drenth’s work is a deep consideration of life. Her vision of the continuation of life after death is made clearly visible. She had, at the tender age of 20, worked photographing the deceased in a mortuary, a somewhat unusual occupation at the time.

‘The materials I use are transformed... everything in life is about transformation from birth to death’


‘The materials I use are transformed... everything in life is about transformation from birth to death’
to express my own feelings. I like old embroideries – but not shown on the wall behind glass. I change them, for example, into a piece of clothing not to wear but to look at. It doesn’t have to be wearable. I love textiles that have already had another function, are worn out and tell a story. Those things are already beautiful by themselves. People sometimes recognise the used, old embroideries, which bring back memories and emotions: they made something similar, or remember their mother’s or grandmother’s pieces.’

Drenth also uses old linen shrouds, which in the past were produced in the Netherlands as part of a girl’s dowry, who would learn how to embroider them at a very young age. The lessons began with a sampler of the alphabet in cross stitch, followed by a collection of other stitches and patterns to serve as a reference in later life – a practice not always enjoyed by the makers. Cross stitch was also used for initials to mark the shrouds. Some have beautifully embroidered edges and are hand sewn. They have no pockets, as wealth and status cannot be expressed in death. Men in the Netherlands used to wear shrouds on their wedding day after which they were washed and carefully put away for their burial. However, these perfect examples of work, many with private, personal feelings attached, became disregarded over time due to changing customs.

From making collages of existing embroideries and textiles, Drenth evolved to producing more and more of the embroidery herself. By adding embroidered song texts or poems, her works became more personal. Her words express emotions, feelings or a message.

Eine Mutter für alle Kinder was made in 2016. The base of this work is an altar cloth embroidered with Gothic letters in 1912 by the German, Aloisia Mader. Alexandra appliquéd the flowered border of an antique pillowcase at the edge of the object and further embellished the cloth herself with Asian children.

Usually she works on two or three objects at the same time. Pictured on these pages are several small pieces embroidered with women changing into fish for an forthcoming project. Drenth finds the embroidery easy to handle and says it can be worked on wherever she travels. She often embroiderers with French knots, and...

‘I love textiles that have already had another function, are worn out and tell a story. Those things are already beautiful by themselves’
Above: It’s All About the Inside. Please Handle with Care... 2015. 16 x 8cm. Repurposed and artist’s own embroidery, thread
Alexandra Dreth embroidering in her garden in Amsterdam

Below: Heimat, 2014. 140 x 250cm. Choir robe c1950, repurposed and artist’s own embroidery, sewing thread, small oil painting portraits, gold embroidery bouillon. Hand embroidery, appliqué

Opposite: Green Pastures, 2015. 108 x 60cm. Antique linen shroud/tunic c1900, possibly older; embroidery and sewing thread, tablecloth. Hand embroidery, appliqué
‘Embroidery is personal for me. I can’t give a workshop to teach others what I do, feel or think. Expressing emotions in textiles is something you have to find for yourself.’

running and back stitch. For Drenth it is not about the difficulty of the stitch, rather that stitches are a means used to express herself. An old green chasuble bought at a fair, is having a makeover using her textile collage technique. The work is being completed on a large table in a corner of her living room when I visit.

‘I see my embroideries as works of art, an object to enjoy. Creating them makes me very happy. I do a lot of research and get my inspiration from flora and fauna. I use all kinds of shapes, from animals to people and vice versa. At the moment, for example, I’m intrigued by women transforming into fish.

‘My inspiration comes from Africa. In my early childhood I lived in Sierra Leone, I recall swimming amongst the fish there every day, I often dream about water and fish. Dreams are sometimes a starting point for me.’

People always ask how long she works on an object: a question she doesn’t like, as there is no simple answer. Adding and taking away is a daily routine until she is satisfied. ‘I can’t work in a hurry: it can take months for me to find the right composition. Experimenting with textiles never bores me but when ready with an object I don’t have a problem with selling it and moving on to the next project. Embroidery is something very personal for me. I can’t give a workshop to teach others what I do, feel or think. Expressing emotions in textiles is something you have to find for yourself. I was asked to make smaller objects to sell in a gift shop but I refused. It would suppress my artistic expression.’

Marion van der Fluit

www.alexandradrenth.nl
‘A FACE BURNED ALMOST BEYOND RECOGNITION. Scarred eyelids turned inside out, tops of the ears missing, two holes where the nose once was, yet there is a quiet bravely optimistic smile. The face of First World War sailor William Vicarage is unforgettable and it’s a face I’ve become indelibly familiar with since I first saw it in his illustrated patient record back in 2004 at the Gillies Archives. I was meeting the archive’s curator Dr Andrew Banji for the first time to discuss putting together a project to research and interpret the lives of some of the 5,000 First World War servicemen treated by facial reconstruction pioneer Sir Harold Gillies. The archive, now housed at the Royal College of Surgeons England, was overwhelming, not only in the photographic content but in the sheer number of cases. Asking Dr Banji which stories he would like me to investigate, that of ‘Willie’ Vicarage was among the first, for it was his story and subsequent surgery that fundamentally changed the way in which facial reconstruction was performed. His is a surgical account of incredible significance from which millions have since benefitted. But it was a solitary family photo of William in his medical records with a person who appeared to be his granddaughter that really intrigued me. Who was she and how did she remember him? William sustained severe cordite burns to his hands and face in the Battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916, which were devastating in so many ways for the former watchmaker from Swansea. His face was burned beyond recognition and hands contorted so severely as to render his fingers unable to use the tools of his trade. One hundred years on, I was given the opportunity by the National Maritime Museum Greenwich to revisit William’s story (and that of fellow Jutland/Gillies veteran Walter Yeo) as artist in residence at the museum for the Battle of Jutland centenary.

MISSING LINK
Since that first meeting with Dr Banji I’d been fortunate in tracing the families of many of the men upon whom my research focused, exhibiting the embroidered uniforms at museums and galleries domestically and internationally, but I’d never been able to trace William’s family. After two appeals in south Wales’ newspapers, I’d had no response other than a correspondent saying she had done a little research on my behalf and had come up with an address for his granddaughter. Five weeks after writing to her, I received a reply and we corresponded via email until we finally met for a very emotional five hours of sharing and storytelling. It turned out, she wasn’t the girl in the photo but another granddaughter and she was able to share personal documents and stories, which inspired the new work I created about William’s story – porcelain gloves in response to his reconstructed hands, and a solitaire set made from vintage watch dials whose hands spell out a personal message in semaphore.

TEXTILES DECODED

the forgotten fighters
Paddy Hartley gives an account of the making of Little Boy Blue, part of an ongoing series of work about the lives of First World War surgery patients.

A FACE BURNED ALMOST BEYOND RECOGNITION. Scarred eyelids turned inside out, tops of the ears missing, two holes where the nose once was, yet there is a quiet bravely optimistic smile. The face of First World War sailor William Vicarage is unforgettable and it’s a face I’ve become indelibly familiar with since I first saw it in his illustrated patient record back in 2004 at the Gillies Archives. I was meeting the archive’s curator Dr Andrew Banji for the first time to discuss putting together a project to research and interpret the lives of some of the 5,000 First World War servicemen treated by facial reconstruction pioneer Sir Harold Gillies. The archive, now housed at the Royal College of Surgeons England, was overwhelming, not only in the photographic content but in the sheer number of cases. Asking Dr Banji which stories he would like me to investigate, that of ‘Willie’ Vicarage was among the first, for it was his story and subsequent surgery that fundamentally changed the way in which facial reconstruction was performed. His is a surgical account of incredible significance from which millions have since benefitted. But it was a solitary family photo of William in his medical records with a person who appeared to be his granddaughter that really intrigued me. Who was she and how did she remember him? William sustained severe cordite burns to his hands and face in the Battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916, which were devastating in so many ways for the former watchmaker from Swansea. His face was burned beyond recognition and hands contorted so severely as to render his fingers unable to use the tools of his trade. One hundred years on, I was given the opportunity by the National Maritime Museum Greenwich to revisit William’s story (and that of fellow Jutland/Gillies veteran Walter Yeo) as artist in residence at the museum for the Battle of Jutland centenary.

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LITTLE BOY BLUE
Most striking was an autograph book given to William by his parents whilst in hospital, in which his fellow patients and family had contributed drawings, poems, songs, cartoons and good wishes. Immediately I knew I wanted to transcribe the contents of each page onto a vintage hospital gown but how to arrange each digital embroidery was the real question. Hand tracing the looping lines of the words and retaining a colour palette authentic to the aged and faded writings, the temptation was to create something beautifully symmetrical, almost ceremonial. But what felt genuinely appropriate was to arrange the embroideries as one would the good wishes written on the inside of a get well soon card: the first pages I translated took up large areas of fabric whilst later contributions had to fit in the spaces remaining. The result was the piece entitled Little Boy in Blue – so named after one of the poems in the book. It is a modestly illustrated garment, which retains the individual hand of each contributor and, in the opinion of William’s family, is entirely appropriate.

www.paddyhartley.com

Paddy Hartley’s work about William Vicarage and Walter Yeo can be seen in the Forgotten Fighters gallery and the Jutland 1919 exhibition at the National Maritime Museum Greenwich until early 2019.

2 Consequence, 2017. Porcelain
3 Make my Move for Me will You My Love, 2017. Wristwatch salvage, porcelain
4&5 Little Boy in Blue, 2017. Vintage hospital gown, digital embroidery. Paddy Hartley’s work is sponsored by the Exeter Sewing Machine Company
5 Detail view showing the installation of the The Yeo Tetraptych (pt II) Curare (Heal), 2017. Vintage hospital gown, digital embroidery, appliqué, pyrography, laser etching
Soraya Abidin was born in Sydney, Australia where she continues to live with her family. She defines herself as a cross-cultural textile artist with interconnections between her Malaysian and Australian origins. ‘My Malaysian father left the confines of Islam when he moved to Sydney with my Australian mother and this caused a disconnection with his family. He died when I was ten years old...’ This loss magnified her preoccupation with identity. In reviewing her work of the past few years and what drives it, Abidin says: ‘Growing up in the 70's era in Australia was very difficult for cross-cultural kids; belonging to neither group, always viewed as the other. I can say, when growing up, I felt like I was caught in the clash of opposing cultures.’ Abidin describes her making process as a vehicle to ‘move through the stages of understanding my identity... it is nostalgic in nature; the materials and activity I engage in are evoked responses from my sensory memory’. Objects are created at a magnified scale, as seen through a child’s eye, recalling memories that are stored at a larger-than-life perspective. Her work encompasses large wall pieces through to three-dimensional sculptural forms. She explored photography and ceramics, gaining a BVA from Sydney College of the Arts when she was 22 years old. During the ensuing decade she added a Teaching Diploma (Visual Arts & Design) and taught herself clothing design and pattern-making, working for a time as a production manager for a small Sydney fashion label. ‘These self-taught skills have been invaluable to my textile art making, especially when creating 3D forms... I often use three-dimensional pattern-making, quilting templates, embroidery and appliqué techniques in my work.’

A focused passion is conveyed by her artworks, whatever series she is working on. ‘Crazy Stitch Bitch’ was an early set of works, the first of her textile pieces, shown in 2007 in Sydney for a group exhibition with fellow art and design teachers. The wall pieces are large, with richly coloured vintage Persian wool hand embroidered on heavy Canadian wool canvas and inspired by remnants of a dream whilst on a family trip. She sought intentionally to challenge traditional embroidery concepts by the use of contemporary three-dimensional soft sculptural forms building a surface of tone and texture through the use of stitches and creating vivid childish blends of deep dreamlike colour.

Abidin’s work is from this era and was inspired by a vintage chocolate box found in a local Op-shop. ‘I was enchanted by the propaganda-esque style of the roses and radiating rising sunrays. This object appealed to my love of clashing Western and Asian style combinations.’

Ride Me, also from 2007, is a vivid image drawn from a dream in which I was riding a colossal soft feathered ostrich... To ride an ostrich is directly related to the spiritual freedom and psychological liberation felt during meaningful travel.’
Soraya Abidin, Peace Mountain, 2016. 40 x 40cm
Hand embroidered and dyed raffia, vintage Swiss straw and vintage metal thread. This piece was made during an Arts Residency at Rimbun Dahan arts centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
1. Ride Me, 2007. 97 x 71cm
Vintage Persian wool and metallic thread, hand embroidered on Canadian wool canvas

2. Welcome, 2017 (detail). 96 x 70cm
Vintage Peranakan and glass beads, sequins, metallic and Gudebrod silk threads on mixed Japanese silks and leather

3. Rimbun Dahan Flower, 2017 (detail). 40 x 40cm
Hand embroidered raffia and gold leaf on Arab street silk

4&5. Pin Tin, 2000. 61 x 45cm. Vintage Persian wool and metallic thread on Canadian wool canvas

6. Gunung Sari, 2016. 96 x 85cm. Hand embroidered raffia, vintage Swiss straw and gold leaf
Abidin describes her art marking process as a vehicle to move through the stages of understanding my identity... it is nostalgic in nature; the materials and activity I engage in are evoked responses from my sensory memory.
Abidin sees this first series as pivotal: ‘I have explored many different media but none has maintained my focus as much as textiles.’ She revels in a kind of naivety, ‘a direct translation of a childhood love of colouring-in... spending many hours firmly scribing colour until I reached a satisfactory surface of shiny intensity.’ Passionately committed to developing her personal language through the motifs she responds to, Abidin refers to ‘making choices that are in pursuit of the new whilst containing a strong traceable line to my heritage’. When she discovered that her Opah, her Malaysian grandmother, had made the curious, beautiful objects she had grown up with, she felt it provided a ‘powerful and auspicious meaning to the medium I had always instinctively gravitated towards as an artist’.

During a month-long residency in 2016 at Rimbun Dahan arts centre, set on 14 acres outside Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, she gathered and researched Malay textiles, and completed Peace Mountain, in which her materials were hand dyed raffia, vintage Swiss Straw and vintage metal thread. There is a central peace symbol of French knots embedded in the work (which was a finalist for the 2017 Wangaratta Art Gallery’s Contemporary Textiles Award Exhibition).

Her stay during the residency in a traditional Malay kampong house inspired Flower Rimbun Dahan. ‘The house was originally from a town called Pantai in Ipoh, which is where my father grew up... All the wooden panels inside and out of the house had flowers carved in the wall panels – so beautiful!’ This drew my attention to the constant presence of flowers in Asian art and reinforced my love for the floral motif. In this case hand embroidered raffia and gold leaf were used on Arab street silk. Abidin loves to reference the importance of gold in the Malay culture describing it as, ‘a culturally coveted treasure, the topic of great conversation and societal admiration, purchased as an investment, worn in all cultural celebrations and used as a marker of milestones for life.’ That, and glittering metallic materials make a strong contrast with the subtle palette of natural raffia as seen in Gunung Sari and Peace Leaf (the latter forming part of a trilogy that includes Flowering for Peace and Messenger, pictured above).

A recent work is Welcome, hand embroidered with metallic threads and...
Gudebrod silk and featuring vintage Peranakan and glass beads, typically found in Malaysian shoes and purse beadwork. She describes the work as ‘saturated with miniature beads, another obsession… now it’s just pulling all my obsessions together – the rawness of embroidered natural raffia and the twinkle of metallic threads, the glistening sparkle of the beads, mum’s quilting and appliqué of Asian silk’. Abidin’s visual and making skills, combined with her determined conceptual reframing ensures her work will continue to have a strong impact on contemporary textiles in Australia. It seems unlikely she will diverge from this passion. ‘My identity is in a constant state of change; it is a process that will take my lifetime to complete.’

Janet De Boer

Above from left: Flowering for Peace, 2016. 23 x 23cm. Hand embroidered raffia and gold leaf
Peace Leaf, 2016. 18 x 5cm. Hand embroidered raffia and gold leaf
Messenger, 2016. 23 x 23cm. Hand embroidered raffia and gold leaf

Right, from top: The artist Soraya Abidin; her Bernina sewing machine; and samples for works in progress
May Morris: Art & Life opened at the William Morris Gallery, London in October, some 28 years after the first retrospective of her work was held there in 1989. Along with two new books about her: May Morris Arts & Crafts Designer and May Morris: Art & Life New Perspectives, there has been something of a revival in both research and interest in May’s life and work. It’s timely. As the Woman’s Hour Craft Prize exhibition tours the country, as stitch and knit continue to thrive – particularly on social media – there is more appetite for the stories and work of women makers than ever before.

With a father like William Morris, May had both advantages and disadvantages in life. History indicates the advantages won out. And this exhibition and accompanying publications certainly prove May is finally getting her due. Along with her undeniable legacy of needlework designs, May was a formidable woman, running the embroidery section of her father’s business Morris & Co by age 23. She travelled, taught and lectured, published and led a life of design when it was a rare and unusual thing for a woman to be doing.

As children May and her sister Jenny were surrounded by creativity on all sides. Their lives were inextricably tied up with the Arts and Crafts movement their father was the design figurehead of. May’s mother Jane and aunt Bessie also worked at Morris & Co, embroidering and supervising the firm’s embroidery workers. As children the two girls made small textile items, played alongside their father’s dye experiments, and posed for Rossetti and others artists in the creative circles in which the family moved. Really, it would have been odd if May had chosen something other than a creative direction in life.

The Arts and Crafts movement was known for a lighter aesthetic than typical Victorian design, particularly in wallpapers and textiles. But the movement was also backgrounded by socialist politics and ideals.

Whilst not a suffragette herself, May was politicised and did much to encourage and promote women and their work. Espousing unity and friendship amongst women. She recognised the isolation that could affect women working in design, who lacked the support networks men had. This culminated in May founding the Women’s Guild of Arts in 1907, her answer to the men-only Artworkers’ Guild.
May was a formidable woman... She travelled, taught and lectured, published and led a life of design when it was a rare and unusual thing for a woman to be doing.
May was an important educationalist. She taught embroidery practice and design at Birmingham School of Art and the Central School of Arts and Crafts and Hammersmith Art School in London. She lectured in Britain and abroad. She edited 24 volumes of her father’s work, writing introductions to each volume. And in 1893 she wrote *Decorative Needlework*, a guide that included simple instructions and drawings, a background to the history of each type of stitch and chapters on design theory. May had joined the National Art Training School in 1878 when she was 16, to study embroidery and design. The school was next to the Victoria and Albert Museum, then a new and shiny institution built with an educational purpose. On graduating she began managing the embroidery department at Morris & Co. The firm had showrooms on Oxford Street in the retail centre of London, selling wallpapers, textiles and furniture. May’s designs for the firm, including their popular embroidery kits, were, by necessity, in the popular Morris style. Among them was a design for the company’s bestselling wallpaper Honeysuckle, which was for years attributed to her father. In fact she must have designed under his shadow and suffered misattributions all the time she worked at Morris & Co. It is telling that she left the firm in 1896, the year her father died. After leaving Morris & Co May was able to pursue her own direction, including lecturing, designing needlework bookbindings and jewellery, undertaking embroidery commissions and running the Women’s Guild of Arts. It is doubtful she earned her living from this work. May had married Henry Halliday Spalding in 1890 but they were divorced in 1899. So she was independent and independently wealthy too. Her socialism meant she was always interested in the situation of women less advantaged. But membership of her Guild was drawn from her circle of maker friends and acquaintances of similar social standing.

By the First World War May was living between London and the family house Kelmscott in Oxfordshire, where her life was reputed to be frugal yet creative. In Oxfordshire, whilst not a suffragette herself, May was politicised and did much to encourage and promote women and their work, espousing unity and friendship amongst women.
May became friendly with Mary Lobb, who would live with her in Kelmscott and remain her close friend until her death in 1939. Miss Lobb, as she was known, was also a fierce champion of May’s work. Yet May valued her own work well enough, and was aware she had a valuable family name. She left her own and the family legacy in safe hands, with bequests to the Victoria & Albert museum and British Library in London and the Ashmolean museum in Oxford. But a lack of accolades whilst she was still alive and the irony of being a designer with William Morris for a father left her a little bitter. Two years before she died May wrote to her old friend George Bernard Shaw: ‘I am a remarkable woman – always was, though none of you seemed to think so.’

The current exhibition and books certainly prove (once again) that May’s work is accomplished and beautiful. The colours in her work are the first things you notice. Usually understated and subtle they are always affecting and evocative. And then the quality of her penmanship is striking, working drawings, often from nature, reveal she knew what she was doing in terms of designing. But – perhaps unexpectedly – her work can also be joyous, particularly once she was free of her work at Morris & Co. When May let rip with her needle, the results, seen in pieces like her bed hanging for Kelmscott (1893), humming with bright pomegranates and birds and flowers, showcase her pure joy in designing and making.

JANE AUDAS

May Morris: Art and Life is on show the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow at until 28 January 2018

wmgallery.org.uk
After leaving Morris & Co, May was able to pursue her own direction, including lecturing, designing needlework book bindings and jewellery, undertaking embroidery commissions and running the Women’s Guild of Arts.

1 Mary Annie Sloane (1867-1961), May Morris in the Tapestry Room at Kelmscott Manor, 1912. Watercolour

2 Photograph showing Jane Morris holding May Morris c1865

3 Arts & Crafts Exhibition catalogue designed by Walter Crane, 1888

4 Photograph of May Morris from US lecture brochure c1910

5 May Morris embroidering at her home, c1920s

6 Tulip and Rose design, printed proof for illustration in Hobby Horse. May Morris (1862–1938) 1888 Print on paper 17 x 9cm

7 Decorative Needlework by May Morris, 1893. Published by Joseph Hughes & Co, London. 23 x 19.5cm

8 May Morris c1890

9 May Morris, The Tapestry Room at Kelmscott Manor. Early 1880s. Pencil and watercolour on paper 12.8 x 17.5cm
Exhibitions

Joyce Petschek, Uranus.
Italian wing chairs, 2015

American Museum in Britain, Bath  18 March – 29 October 2017

BREAKING THE PATTERN, an exhibition of work by the American embroiderers Joyce Petschek, has been on show at the American Museum in Britain for the last six months. Petschek specializes in bargello work – also known as flame stitch or Florentine stitch – and the exhibition shows how she has taken this form of needlework and used it to create embroidery that is distinctly modern, and very personal. Bargello work is created using rows of vertical stitches in different colours, slightly offset one against another, to create a series of abstract ‘flame’ or zig-zag patterns. Petschek uses this traditional technique, but creates pieces worked with patterns that are very far from traditional. Many of them, although seemingly abstract, are inspired by her own experiences, her travels or the natural world. Two large framed pieces are inspired by a spider’s web and peacock feathers respectively. The first is worked in gentle silver and greys and the second in brilliant greens. Petschek says of the later, Peacock Plumage: ‘My stitched designs are not concerned with perspective, light or space; my aim is to evolve a mood related to memory and illusion, a completely different harmony.’ Other pieces are inspired by her interest in Tibetan Buddhism and meditation and often have a strong spiritual theme. A large framed piece, Heart Wisdom, was based on a drawing of the heart line a doctor friend made for her and represents the way the human consciousness develops during a lifetime. As well as her bold, and often unexpected patterns, Petschek’s embroidery is marked by her strong sense of colour. Many of the pieces are worked in brilliant tones and positively zing. Petschek enjoys putting together colours in unusual combinations – for example lilac diamond shaped motifs float above an acid green ground on a Victorian gothic chair seat. Bargello work was traditionally embroidered in wool, but Petschek uses silk to add extra intensity to her colours. Given the fact that the glowing colours are central to the work, it’s a shame that some of the pieces on show here are fairly poorly lit. Those hung in darker areas, such as the museum entrance hall, would benefit from a well-aimed spotlight.

The exhibition also includes examples of Petschek’s work for upholstery. She enjoys re-covering antique furniture with her startling embroidery, juxtaposing the old with the new. I particularly liked the Italian wing chair covered with a bold pattern of ovals intersected with bands of waves and stripes in glowing pinks, purples and aquamarines. The upholstery on the nearby 19th-century Moroccan ‘nomad’s stool’ is a good example of how Petschek develops her designs. It’s covered with a seemingly abstract pattern of large triangles, but on the label she explains the inspiration behind the pattern: ‘visions of deep blue nights under desert skies, pyramids within pyramids and the passageways into them, steps leading outwards and silent moments out of time.’ It’s a very personal and very romantic - almost fey – approach, but one that allows Petschek to create dramatic and technically highly accomplished embroideries.

DIANA WOOLF
Alice Kettle Threads

Winchester Discovery Centre  28 October 2017 - 14 January 2018

THREADS, AN EXHIBITION OF work by Alice Kettle at Winchester Discovery Centre, celebrates the 10-year anniversary of the installation of her huge public artwork at the Centre. It's described as a mini-retrospective and a selection of work made by Kettle over the last ten years is on show in the upstairs gallery space. However the best place to start is in the library café downstairs where Kettle’s Looking Forward to the Past (2007) is on permanent show. A massive 16 metre-long, machine stitched wall hanging, it’s a dramatic exploration of Winchester’s heritage referencing local treasures such as Antony Gormley’s Sound II sculpture in the Cathedral and the Winchester Bible.

At first sight the work in the upstairs gallery is similar sharing the same ambitious scale, painterly approach to colour and interest in the human figure, but most differ in a small, but technically significant way. They have been embroidered onto printed canvas, which, in an important departure, Kettle leaves partly visible (rather than embroidering the whole ground).

She developed this approach after experimenting with the multi-needle Schiffl embroidery machine, a step change she describes on one of the labels: ‘(I realised) I do not have to cover the fabric with stitch: I can let each mark breathe. For the first time in 21 years I have liberated the fabric.’ This combination of print and stitch seems to enable Kettle to introduce increasingly subtle colours and shadings, and allows the embroidery to stand out more emphatically, giving greater definition to her stitched lines, and reminding the viewer that Kettle originally trained as a fine artist.

The exhibition is dominated by her latest work, The Sea. Another huge wall hanging (nearly eight metres long), it’s a mesmerising swirl of colour, with deep blues, turquoises, lilacs and clouds of silver beautifully evoking the sea in all its complexity and movement. The surface is punctuated by dense splashes of embroidered red, gold and deep blue, which add to its jewel-like quality. However, on closer inspection you realise that these splashes of colour represent drowning bodies, and that this is actually a depiction of the sea as graveyard, not playground. It’s inspired by Kettle’s concern about the migrant crisis and is the first of several works that she is making for a new project, Thread Bearing Witness. This will involve working collaboratively with asylum seekers and refugees to create stitched artworks, which will go on show at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester next year.

Several other large figurative wall hangings are also on show, including the disturbing Golden Dawn with its unsettling marriage of the Minotaur legend with contemporary far right Greek nationalism, but I was particularly interested in two smaller heads, Coeus and Agape. Both were made using off-cuts from Looking Forwards to the Past and are built up out of layers of embroidered material to create a three-dimensional effect, a technique I hadn’t seen used by Kettle previously. The result is a form of textile cubism and shows once again her highly skilled and innovative use of embroidery.

Diana Woolf

Left: Threads installed in the gallery, with The Sea on the left and Odyssey on the rear wall
PHOTOGRAPHY: JOE LOWD
GHOULISH THOUGHTS ARE ENCOURAGED by shop displays of witches’ hats and broomsticks during the autumnal month of October, culminating with Hallowe’en. The stories told in the knotted tapestries by Anne Jackson in the exhibition Certaine Wytches: Fear, Myth & Magic during this month reflected this but on a completely different level.

Anne Jackson has been passionately involved in pulling together the multiple strands of maybe factual, maybe mythical, but certainly dramatic and non sugar-coated factual stories based on the theme of witch trials, a common law that was only repealed in 1951. ‘My intention is absolutely to create a narrative, based as closely as possible on factual information about a historical phenomenon.’

Anne built up this textile collection over a number of years, reflecting her strong feminist viewpoint and sense of injustice to the ‘victim’ in today’s Western culture. Her painstaking research involved long hours reading original witch trial pamphlets in libraries and museums, which revealed the invisible history of the women who were denied a voice.

Anne gives them this voice through the narrative of her Witchcraft series of tapestries that illustrate, quite strongly, the brutal way society dealt with women who were considered outsiders perceived as witches between 1566 and 1682. They were probably healers, councillors and comforters. Her interest was sparked on discovering a memorial plaque in an Exeter park that commemorated four women who were the last people to be hanged for witchcraft in England in 1682.

Certaine Wytches, Chelmsford, Essex references the witch trial of Joan Waterhouse, the first woman to be executed for witchcraft in England. Joan’s daughter, Agnes, and grandmother, Eve, were also convicted under the same common law in 1566.

This piece shows large rope nooses, suspended between the three images of these convicted women. The composition suggests that they are respectfully finally laid to rest within the depth of the deep, dark coloured grounds with their ‘familiars’ (cat-like creatures) at their feet. Perhaps the artist is paying the overdue homage that these women deserve.

The imagery and text in Anne Jackson’s large tapestries replicate ancient wood block prints and symbols of magic spells that authenticate the veracity of the serious story they tell.

The description of collecting ‘strands’ of a story that Anne uses to describe her ideas for each tapestry also relates to her individual method of knotted tapestry. Anne described the tightly formed half-hitch knots worked in multiple rows of yarns, knotting the weft over the warp, to create a solid but textured surface. She has fine-tuned this technique and can control it to illustrate every detail of the wood cut figurative images and intricate shapes of Olde English text.

Visitors of all ages have found something to engage them in this exhibition, taking time to read the supporting information displayed alongside each piece or to wonder at the pictorial images within the tapestries. Maybe they were also tempted to move their hands over the surface in case they might experience the realistic, almost three-dimensional, images of skeletons, witches ‘familiars’ and giant rope nooses.

This exhibition was supported by Museum in the Park curator, Abigail Large, with an imaginative programme of events – plays on Dark Tales, talks on ‘wise women’ and healing tales and craft activities to make good luck charms and secret spells.

Anne Jackson says of her work: ‘It’s about grasping at strands of belief, memory and twisting them into skeins and knotting them into something solid and material, which I send out into the world.’

SIÂN MARTIN

A catalogue of the exhibition ‘Witch, Hexe, Sorciere: Works from The Witchcraft Series’ is available £12

Anne Jackson, Certaine Wytches, Chelmsford, Essex, 1566 (2009), 195 x 156cm. Knotted tapestry, cotton, linen, synthetic yarns
NIGEL CHENEY’S EXAMINATION of the First World War as it impacted on his family and local history is, like the exhibition title, layered with multiple meanings. This work rewards repeat viewing, with intricately devised pieces packed with carefully chosen imagery and fine details, subtle shifts between richly coloured embroideries, patchwork and appliqué, and more minimal digital prints with scant addition. It is moving and sad, but not without a dark wit and playfulness of scale and construction.

The starting point for the project, which took Cheney some years to develop, was the death of his great grandfather in April 1917 in France. Corporal William Holman received three medals and died near Arras in the battle of Vimy Ridge. Growing up, Cheney was not even aware of this fact, as family mythology mistakenly placed the Corporal’s death at Ypres, Belgium. Uncovering this truth and many others has entailed a vast amount of research for Cheney, as well as the creation of a singularly striking and not inconsiderable body of work. Alongside pieces conceived about his own family, he was also moved by his uncle’s published research into the backgrounds of eleven men commemorated by Naseby village’s war memorial, in Northamptonshire. The result is five distinct groups of works ranged around the gallery walls and ante-room, mainly as several series of disassembled, reconstructed and embellished uniforms and kit bags. Across the exhibition, faces of long dead young men solemnly gaze out, neatly clipped moustaches, jaunty hats, proud of the uniforms they bore, and naturally unaware of their fate. Some individual works are brashly colourful, heavily overlaid with found fabrics, thread, facsimile badges, and other ‘decoration’, but the exhibition as a whole is presented precisely and thoughtfully, with a sombre but warm grey on the outer walls, echoing the colours of the uniforms. Cheney explains that while he scoured local records and family archives for suitable photos and facts to incorporate, the actual uniforms have all been acquired second-hand.

Bleak humour is evident in the way that uniforms and kit bags are skilfully patched together to become ‘body bags’, sadly only too relevant to the stories told, and overlaid with raw stencilled service numbers. Cheney’s playful stitch seems several soldiers’ shoulders and chests densely carpeted in artificial red poppies, or kantha-style patches. Their ‘medals’ are digital prints or ornamental bars of embroidery silks, becoming literal decorations but imbued always with meaning.

The gallery’s centre is occupied by the Service Records series, commemorating the Naseby Eleven, who died between May 1915 and September 1918. These are digital prints using photographs of the men themselves, where available, plus details of their lives and death. Cheney has built these layered images carefully, showing his skill in composition, and then gently enhanced each with a trail of red stitching that falls to the floor. He is not the first to use red as a metaphor for blood and death, but the delicacy of his touch is superb.

Textile artists generally hate to be asked: ‘How long did that take to make?’ as if time spent was more significant than the output, but in Cheney’s case he can take justifiable pride in creating this opus over four long years – as long and as sad and moving as the war itself.

Liz Cooper
A SELECTION OF HANNAH RYGGEN’s (1894-1970) striking tapestries are currently on show at Oxford’s museum of modern art. She was a committed socialist and political activist and subjects include the rise of Nazi Germany and the Vietnam War. Although not a household name in the UK, Ryggen is well-known in her native Norway, where she has the distinction of being the first living textile artist to have work bought by the National Gallery of Oslo (in 1953).

Ryggen started off as a school teacher and then began evening classes in painting, spending six years studying with the painter Fredrik Krebs. In 1923 she decided to take up tapestry and moved with her husband to his family’s farm in the remote area of Orlandet. Here she taught herself weaving, as well as learning to spin and dye the wool from their sheep. It is not clear what prompted her interest in tapestry, although the exhibition quotes Ryggen describing herself as ‘a painter, not a weaver, a painter whose tool is not the brush, but the loom’. Frustratingly, the curators follow Ryggen’s lead and treat her very much as a fine artist rather than textile artist, and so there is little exploration of the significance of textile in her work or her place in a textile art context – for example, I would have loved to have known what that other great producer of political tapestry, Grayson Perry, makes of her work.

That caveat aside, this is a fascinating exhibition. Ryggen was a highly talented narrative artist and pattern maker and her tapestries are an intriguing mix of folk art and contemporary European avant-garde. Her 1935 tapestry Ethiopia is made up of a gentle abstract pattern of cream and brown rectangles, each infilled with a pleasing pattern of raised stripes woven in pile – so far so folk. However, above this is a frieze depicting the heads of Mussolini (impaled on a spear), an unknown African, the Emperor Haile Selassie and the King of Italy Victor Emmanuel III – a stark condemnation of Italy’s unlawful invasion of Ethiopia. Ryggen’s anger grows as the decade progresses, with tapestries such as the Death of Dreams (1936) depicting the Nazi leaders Goring, Goebbels and Hitler dragging a corpse over a jail wall made of interlocking swastikas. 6 October 1942 (1943) is her response to the German occupation of Norway and shows the execution of theatre director Henry Gleditsch overseen by a flying Adolf Hitler, while a nearby tapestry depicts her artist husband painting skulls whilst in a German concentration camp.

The post-war works are similarly political, but Ryggen’s earthy colour palette seems to brighten and the final piece her Blood in the Grass (1966), is a colourful comment on the media coverage of President Lyndon Johnson’s cruelty to his dog (and the only tapestry made using chemically dyed wools). It’s also one of the few pieces that incorporates pile to add an element of texture to Ryggen’s flat pattern-making – perhaps an indication that in her later life she began to enjoy the technical possibilities of tapestry as much as it’s use as a narrative vehicle.

Diana Woolf
THIS EXHIBITION OF MORE than 50 works by Malcolm Lochhead at Glasgow Cathedral provided an overview of the accomplished career of this artist, designer and former Glasgow Caledonian University professor. The word ‘sacred’ in the title relates to the ecclesiastical commissions often associated with his name. These are mostly personal commemorative works undertaken since the 1970s for churches in Scotland. ‘Profane’ is merely the opposite of sacred and refers to his secular and community projects as well as a number of personal artworks.

Malcolm Lochhead’s artistic beginnings were to prove pivotal. He studied at Glasgow School of Art (1966-1970), initially intent on a career in interior design but instead chose embroidered and woven textiles taught by the influential embroiderer Kathleen Whyte (1909-1996). In fact it was Whyte who encouraged him to accept an early ecclesiastical commission from Glasgow Cathedral for a Yellow Pulpit Fall (1969), and he embraced her advice that ‘a church hanging should act as a road sign, strong and visible from a distance and increasing in meaning as the viewer approaches’.

His first major commission came from the Glasgow and West of Scotland Embroiderers’ Guild for an altar cloth and kneelers for the Cathedral’s Tomb of Saint Mungo (1970). It is wonderful to view his original pencil and gouache scheme, which was translated into the final article using shades of Seker’s dupion. This ability to think from sketch to stitch is one that he has repeated successfully throughout his career: in the exuberant Thoughts hanging for Maggie’s Centre; in his chair designs embroidered by volunteer nurses for The Scottish Nurses Chapel (1979); and in twelve chairs for the office of the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1993). In the latter, Lochhead wanted the final embroideries to retain the quality of his original scheme’s scribbled marks, which the Embroiderers’ Guild of Edinburgh interpreted admirably. The intricate gradations of coloured stitches when executed at this standard highlight how embroidery is not a kind of ‘paint by numbers’ but brings an extra dimension of complexity that allows the finished outcome to truly sing.

The accompanying catalogue, written in Lochhead’s own words, makes vital reading. When describing personal ecclesiastical commissions, he provides context to the symbolism in each piece. And whilst he thinks like a designer first and foremost there is also much warmth here. ‘Church is a formal setting bound by doctrine yet his commemorative works show great sensitivity to the stories, hopes and wishes of those involved without ever descending into sentimentality. Reading his words about the Pulpit Fall for Muriel one cannot fail to be moved by the many beautiful influences that underscore this tribute to a friend’s mother on her way to the ‘star maker’.

When it comes to his personal practice, his textile vocabulary is so inventive and his execution often so complex, occasionally it can be hard to decipher individual techniques. One can appreciate this in his personal works, in which he is free to explore methods, moods and influences right up the very edges of the technique he is working. Stately Dance is one example, of which he says: ‘If one has a good idea, then it should be worked hard’.

Individually the works in this show, whether secular or ecclesiastical, personal or completed by a community of stitchers, reward the time spent with them – not only through the richness of their execution but the narratives within. Collectively they provide not only a record of the development of the artist’s practice over the decades but a glimpse into wider developments within embroidery and textiles both within the Church and beyond.

There are many histories bound by the walls of Glasgow Cathedral and this exhibition spoke not just of a career in stitch but of the artist’s life, one inspired by embroidery and enriched by the teaching and sharing of it. One hopes that this exhibition will be repeated so that others may enjoy it.

Jo Hall

Catalogue £5

Malcolm Lochhead, Yellow Pulpit Fall for the Nave of Glasgow Cathedral, 1969. The central circle shows a Greek cross and in its quadrants, references to Saint Mungo, his miracles, and the rebirth of Glasgow...
Books

The Geometry of Hand-Sewing
A Romance in Stitches and Embroidery from Alabama Chanin and the School of Making
Natalie Chanin

In 2000, slow fashion pioneer Natalie Chanin founded Alabama Chanin, a unique lifestyle brand that was based on sustainable principles and responsible production. The style she championed relied heavily on the clever use of simple hand embroidery, which elevated cotton clothing (she favoured organic cotton T-shirt fabric most) into couture garments that were, and still remain, highly desirable. Over the years, she and her team taught her distinctive style of stitched embellishment to hundreds of people, and in this book she shares the system for doing so, which is based on basic geometry. It’s a straightforward approach, yet the results are more sophisticated than one might anticipate. The first chapter introduces the two reusable plastic cards that come with the book. These feature seven different grids that determine the shape and size of your stitches. Chapter two introduces tools and materials. The real story begins in the third section, which introduces the basic stitches; chapter four shows how to enhance these using beads, sequins and by combining stitches; whilst five tackles manipulating the grid, and a final chapter concentrates on creating advanced patterning. Altogether in style and sensibility this book reads like a contemporary sampler project for the 21st century embroiderer. By focusing solely on the stitches themselves, rather than projects or garments, one begins to appreciate the striking potential of the 100 featured techniques, and the potential for broadening one’s repertoire. The pages are filled with photographs of examples of each stitch (shown front and back), and accompanied by instructions and the occasional image showing how these simple stitches embellish Alabama Chanin’s clothing line to great effect.

Like the beautiful garments she produces, this book is a perfect blend of beautiful craftsmanship and practicality making it a genuine addition to even the most experienced embroiderers’ bookshelf.

Allen £17.99
978 1 4197 26367

Textiles of the Middle East and Central Asia
The Fabric of Life
Fahmida Suleman

This book includes more than 200 textiles from the Middle East and Central Asia selected from the British Museum’s renowned collection of nearly 3,000 pieces, most of which date from the late 18th and early 21st centuries. A major factor defining the textile traditions in this vast territory is the importance of embroidery as a means of communication and expression. Whether produced at home or purchased from traders, embroidery on garments, homewares and ceremonial artefacts often conveyed status, identity, upbringing, familial wealth or good taste. Until the early 1900s, every aspect of life in this region embraced embroidered textiles and its teaching was important. In the Ottoman Empire, instructors were brought to the palace and to private homes to teach girls needlework. Up until 1948, Palestinian village girls would learn embroidery from the age of around six; and stitches were often assigned memorable names locally, such as ‘old man’s teeth’, ‘bachelor’s cushion’ and ‘eggs in a pan’ as demonstrated by a sampler from Ramallah collected by Grace Crowfoot in the 1930s.

It’s a vast subject: Fahmida Suleman explores it in chapters designated to childhood; marriage and ceremony status and identity; religion and belief; house and homestead and finally politics and conflict – and in addition to examining the past, includes contemporary works, like the flags produced in the last 10 years by Sara Rahbar, an Iranian living in the US. Filled with images of male, female and children’s garments, hats and headaddresses, mosque curtains and prayer mats, floor coverings, tent hangings, hand towels and cushions, storage sacks, purses and cosmetic pouches, dolls and souvenirs, animal trapings and amulets, this book lives up to its title in examining ‘the fabric of life’ across time in this vast region.

Thames and Hudson £29.95
978 0 500 519912
The Wild Dyer
A Guide to Natural Dyes and the Art of Patchwork and Stitch
Abigail Booth

Abigail Booth (the textile half of Forest + Found) taught herself to dye when she couldn’t locate the kind of coloured fabrics she wanted to work with. Perhaps that’s what makes her approach so refreshingly down to earth. In The Wild Dyer, she talks us through the foundations of natural dyeing, with the aim of inspiring a natural curiosity and sense of discovery for those who want to begin experimenting with dyes.

In the first two chapters, she explores both the kitchen (who knew that avocado stones produce a beautiful strong pink pigment) and the garden (rhubarb makes a warm grey) as sources of plant pigments, and includes some basic stitch techniques that allow you to complete some of the 15 projects inside, such as the dyer’s apron and placemats.

Further chapters introduce summer and autumn foraging and how to grow your own plants for dyeing, as well as preparing fabrics and a range of handy tools. Best of all she shares how you can make a start inexpensively with just some basic equipment. If you are at all curious about the art of dyeing fabrics from natural sources, The Wild Dyer demystifies the processes involved, using simple steps and is illustrated beautifully throughout.

Embroidered & Stitched Textile Fragments from Kashmir
In the collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles
Anne Morrell

The Calico Museum’s collection of Kashmir shawls is comprised of 717 examples, and this book is dedicated to a part of that collection – a random collection of 1,573 stitched and embroidered fragments dating from the early 19th century to the mid-20th century, most of which feature motifs taken from corners and ends of shawls or wraps.

Anne Morrell brings her expertise of textiles of the Indian sub-continent to bear as she studies and records the stitches used in their patterns and motifs. Stitch and embroidery techniques most likely developed through this period as a way of reducing the time and cost involved in producing a woven product. Thus a refugar (embroiderer) might be involved in enhancing the design of a woven shawl using embroidery, some of which was incredibly fine, to outline or infill certain motifs. Thus, as Morrell explains in her introduction, the pieces in this collection ‘are an example of work that should not have a strict definition’.

She possesses an almost forensic ability in dissecting these textiles (both front and back) now that all that remains of their original makers is the occasional stitched inscription to indicate a workshop, maker or location. The sources of insight she brings to bear are woven from many strands, making for an interesting read far broader than the initial subject might suggest. Whether personal observations recorded on her travels to Kutch or the notebooks of Louise Pesel, her insights are matched amply by the colour plates, which are magnified so that the stitches and their execution can be fully appreciated.

Inspiration Kantha
Creative Stitchery and Quilting

The appeal of kantha is its simplicity. The ease with which running stitch can be worked in various patterns and lengths provides an array of possibilities, which is explored by Anne Hergert in this book, which is filled with examples of motifs to stitch and projects to complete. Hergert shows you how to begin a personal kantha reference library and includes a gallery of examples, including large-scale works to inspire the ambitious.

Schiffer Books £23.99
978 0 7643 5357 4

The Mr X Stitch Guide to Cross Stitch

Cross stitch has shaken off its lame image in recent years, largely thanks to pioneers like Jamie Chalmers, better known as Mr X Stitch. In this book he captures the energy of the contemporary cross stitch revival, with examples of modern designs and 20 projects, backed up with instructions on the basics of cross stitching – from materials and tools to techniques, using computer programs and colour blending. Once you’ve mastered the basics, he shows how artists have refined the basic cross stitch to make works that are both striking (cross-stitched fences by Les Deuz’Bro) and original (stitched metal works by Severiją Inčiauskaitė-Kriaunevičienė).

Search Press Ltd £12.99
978 1 78221 424 3
EDINBURGH Daughters of Penelope until 20 January 2018. Dovecot Studios, 10 Infirmary Street, Edinburgh EH1 1LT. T 0131 529 3660. dovecotstudios.com

EDINBURGH Songs for Winter: Charles Poulson & Pauline Burridge until 4 March 2018. City Art Centre 2 Market St, Scotland EH1 1D.E. T 0131 529 3993. edinburghmuseums.org.uk

FARNHAM Contemporary Textiles until 6 January 2018. New Ashgate Gallery, Waggons Yard, Surrey GU9 7PS. T 01252 713 208. newashgategallery.org.uk

GOOLE Christine Heath: Extreme Weather Patterns until 27 January 2018. Goole Museum, Carlisle Street Goole, East Riding of Yorkshire DN14 5SD. T 01405 768 963 museums.eastriding.gov.uk

HARROGATE Sheila Bownas: A Yorkshire Life in Pattern until 7 January 2018. Mercer Art Gallery, 1 Swan Road HG1 2SA. T 01423 556 188 harrogate.gov.uk


LONDON Beazley Designs of the Year until 28 January 2018. Design Museum, 224–228 Kensington High Street, Kensington W8 6AQ. T 020 3862 5900 designmuseum.org


LONDON Embellishment in Fashion until March 2018. The Royal School of Needlework, Apartment 1A Hampton Court Palace, Surrey KT8 9AL. Pre-booked tours only. T 020 3116 6932. royal-needlework.org.uk

LONDON Kissing The Shuttle: Caitlin Hinchshelwood until 28 January 2018. Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent’s Park Road NW1 7AY. T 020 7485 2206 cecilsharphouse.org.uk


LONDON May Morris: Art and Life until 28 January 2018. William Morris Gallery, Lloyd Park, Forest Road, Walthamstow E17 4PP. T 020 8496 4390. wmgallery.org.uk

LONDON Make.Shift until 13 February 2018. Collyer Bristow Gallery, 4 Bedford Row WC1R 4TF. T 020 7242 7363. collyerbristow.com/art-gallery

MAIDSTONE Concealed: Art Textiles Made in Britain until 10 February 2018. Maidstone Museum, St Faith’s Street, Kent ME14 1LH. T 01622 602 838. maidstone.museum.gov.uk

MANCHESTER Beyond Borders: South Asian textiles by Raisa Kabir (England), Yasmin Nupur (Bangladesh), Risham Syed (Pakistan) and CONA until 3 June 2018. Barbara Brown solo exhibition until 7 January 2018. Whitworth Art Gallery, Oxford Road M15 6ER. T 0161 275 7450. whitworth.manchester.ac.uk

MANCHESTER South Asian Design until May 2018. Manchester Art Gallery, Mosley Street M2 3JL. T 0161 235 8888. manchesterartgallery.org

MARGATE Tracey Emin My Bed / JMW Turner until 14 January 2018. Turner Contemporary, Rendezvous Kent CT9 1HG. T 01843 233 000. turnercontemporary.org

OLDHAM The Textile Study Group: DIS/Rupt until 24 February 2018. Gallery Oldham, Oldham Cultural Quarter, Greaves Street, Lancashire OL1 1AL. T 0161 770 4653 galleryoldham.org.uk

ROMSEY Kaffe Fassett’s Colour at Motisfont until 14 January 2018. Motisfont (NT), Motisfont Lane, nr Romsey, Hampshire SO51 0LP. T 01794 340 757. nationaltrust.org.uk/motisfont


RUTHIN NunoZokuScarves until 27 January 2018. Ruthin Craft Centre, Park Rd, Wales LL15 1BB. T 01824 704 774. ruthincraftcentre.org

SOUTH SHIELDS Paddy Killer Drawn Thread Work – Samplers & Specimens until 30 March 2018. Customs House Gallery, Mill Dam, NE33 1ES. T 0191 454 1234. customshouse.co.uk/gallery

www.janome.co.uk
WINCHESTER Alice Kettle: Threads until 14 January 2018. The Gallery, Winchester Discovery Centre, Jewry Street, Hampshire SO23 8SB. T 01962 873 603. hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk

LEEDS In the Spotlight: Celebrating 35 Years until 6 January 2018. The Craft Centre & Design Gallery, City Art Gallery, The Headrow, West Yorkshire LS1 3AB. T 0113 378 7241 craftcentreleeds.co.uk

OXFORD Hannah Rygen until 18 February 2018. Oxford, 30 Pembridge St OX1 T 0 1865 722 733. modernartoxford.org.uk

SOUTH YORKSHIRE Naseem Darbey: We Are Saved by Loss until 2 February 2018. Akroyd Park, Boothtown Rd, Cumbria LA10 5LW. T 01525 308 710. ragm.co.uk

SCUNTHORPE Naseem Darbey: We Are Saved by Loss until 2 February 2018. Akroyd Park, Boothtown Rd, Cumbria LA10 5LW. T 01525 308 710. ragm.co.uk

SHEFFIELD Handmade for 2021 until 13 February 2018. Sheffield, 29-31 The Headrow, West Yorkshire S1 2PP. T 0114 278 2600. millenniumgallery.net

SCUNTHORPE Upholstery: Farfield Mill, Little Elborow Street, Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 7TW. T 014 763 803. maclellanmuseums.co.uk


UKRAINE Fibremen 6 February 2018. Textilmuseet, Boras. textilmuseet.se

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