



April, 2019. Newsletter

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Many thanks to Frances Love for her response to the last newsletter:

The first time I saw the English Tapestry it was on display at Norwich Cathedral. I have been to Kendall and seen all the tapestries there, but the biggest number of viewers has always been the Cathedral exhibitions. And they charge for admittance! I have seen the tapestries in three or four cathedrals. The cathedral folk like to choose their favourites and seem to be able to. So Kendal must have a flexible loans policy.

There was a big exhibition in the Quaker town of Mountmellick (The Manchester of Ireland) and it was lovely. Roy and Bridget went but I got the feeling it was a Quaker endeavour combined with the Mountmellick lace workers and another fabric workers cooperative. I am telling you this and I expect you know already, but in England and Ireland, interested people, external to Quaker Meetings, who seem to be keen on seeing the panels. I have told people in Ireland about Kendal (I go every year to a drum school and to learn Irish) and some of the English and Swiss people have taken a trip there and are going to try little family projects etc after seeing the panels.

This doesn't actually help with your display ideas, but it might nudge some genius thought.

Love and Light, Frances.



And from Bridget Guest:

I am enjoying your newsletters very much. It is good to keep in touch with the project. Our Dunera Boys panel is coming along nicely if a little slowly. The museum opened this week so we can get back to the embroidery. Janet was working on the union jack flag this week but she wasn't happy with how it was progressing so she unpicked... we've now solved the problem she was having and made a new design for the flag. There will be an extra little bit of linen on the calico back – but only you and I and Janet will know.

If you are ever in the north of the country I would love to meet you and show you around the Tapestry.

With all good wishes

Bridget

Bridget Guest

General Manager

And a very welcome word from Townsville from Brydget Barker-Hudson

Dear Sally

I read your article in Yearly Meeting letter concerning displaying the Quaker Panels,

We have a very small group in Townsville and have been through difficult times with floods recently.

We have a charming gallery which was flood damaged and I need to find out when they will open again.

Would you be open to sending panels / display materials to Townsville?

Obviously a very preliminary enquiry to establish contact with you.

Best regards

Brydge

This newsletter is light on Australian news so I am including some articles from other sources.

First from *Inspirations Magazine*, from an article by Rebecca Deczynski about contemporary embroiderers, published on March 4th, 2019.

From historical samplers to expansive tapestries, embroidery has been an inspiring, expressive art form for thousands of years. Lately, an increased interest in embroidery has led to the emergence of artists who are pushing the boundaries of the medium. Here, you won't see any simple embroidery hoops with messages that range from coy to cheesy. The beauty of embroidery lies in its details.

When artists painstakingly pair unexpected hues, craft surprising textures, and render breathtaking images in a 3-D form, there's plenty of inspiration to take away. Our

favourite contemporary embroiderers are those who experiment with colour and texture—bringing their own visions to life with the help of a needle and some thread—and drawing inspiration from nature, the human experience, and their most vivid daydreams.

The article features works of 9 different artists but I have chosen two.



Kimi Kahara's embroidery frames the natural world in colours and textures that lend them a playfulness. A mountain range may be accented by a smattering of sequins, and an artichoke might be rendered in all the colours of the rainbow.





Michelle Kingdom's embroidery is akin to the work of surrealist painters like Salvador Dalí and Frida Kahlo: it shows odd, stirring scenes of humans and wildlife, frequently with elements of magical realism intertwined.

And from this Saturday's Melbourne Age,

<https://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/books/threads-of-life-review-clare-hunter-embroiders-a-unique-history-20190325-h1crl.html>

Threads of Life: A History of the World Through the Eye of a Needle, by Clare Hunter, Sceptre, \$32.95

By Frances Atkinson, March 29, 2019 — 12.15pm

Threads of Life should not be mistaken for a docile, meandering read about the joys of sewing. On the contrary, you can expect insightful, moving and thrilling stories, as Scottish-born textile artist and curator Clare Hunter singles out textiles with historical importance and pulls them into tight focus by pairing each one with a theme such as power, captivity, identity, loss and protest.



Embroidery is an ancient craft, and preserved remains have been found on clothing, boots and hats, dating back to 3000 BCE. Hunter uses each piece of textile as deftly as Doctor Who uses a TARDIS – each chapter a portal from medieval France, to 1970s Argentina where women marched with the names of missing children embroidered onto their headscarves, to the 2000 hand-sewn biographies representing the lives of people who have died of AIDS-related causes. But perhaps what Hunter does best of all, is reveal the remarkable women (and some men) who used the humble needle and thread to speak their truth.

It begins with a forensic look at the Bayeux Tapestry, picturing the Battle of Hastings. Designed by a male and almost certainly stitched by women, the piece depicts 632 men, more than 200 horses, 55 dogs, more than 500 other animals and birds, and six women. Made in the 1070s, the 70-metre long tapestry caught the eye of Heinrich

Himmler, and in 1944, the Gestapo chief planned to steal it from the Louvre. The plot failed, thanks to code breakers at Bletchley Park. The piece is singled out because it is emblematic of how works of this kind would often be treated throughout history: undervalued, dismissed, anonymous.

Hunter can cite several galling examples where old codgers have taken pains to belittle sewing and is frequently amazed at how "cheerful" it makes some men to "survey a group of women embroidering some intricate appliqué in exquisite fabrics and joke 'I've got some trousers that need taking up'".

There was a time, however, when embroidery reigned supreme. When Mary Queen of Scots returned to Scotland after the death of her husband, she brought the "visual language of the French elite" and spectacular clothes that ensured she inhabited "a separate physical space". Moments before her execution, Mary's attendants removed her black outer dress to reveal a red petticoat, the Catholic colour of martyrdom.

In stark contrast, and a lifetime later, a woman named Lorina Bulwer was locked away in Great Yarmouth's workhouse after the death of her mother. With needle and thread, on long strips of fabric, she made her feelings known in capital letters: "I HAVE WASTED TEN YEARS IN THIS DAMNATION HELL TRAMP DEN OF OLD WOMEN OLD BAGS."

In her chapter on Connection, Hunter writes about how different fabrics hold onto memory; cotton will "stubbornly retain the mark of its folds that no amount of ironing can fully erase. Velvet presses against its pile, will flatten to dull sheen", and linen scrunched in the hand will emerge "peaked and dimpled like a small mountain range". Perhaps this is why, Hunter suggests, quilts are now being used to help people with

dementia, because "sewing not only traps memory; it can also help rekindle it".

Reading this entertaining book unpicked a memory of my own: about four years after my Mum passed away, a button on a favourite shirt came loose. After a moment of annoyance, came a pang of grief – it was the same button my Mum had anchored years before. Hunter captures the sentiment perfectly: "Sewing is a way to mark our existence on cloth: patterning out place in the world, voicing our identity, sharing something of ourselves with others and leaving an indelible evidence of our presence in stitches held fast by our touch."

Please send photos of your progress for the May letter.

Tessa and Barney are hunkered down doing the book and hope to send it to the printers in the next weeks.



James Backhouse in the North West Tasmanian forest.