

Embroidery through the ages



Adam & Eve, c1650-1700, in silver metal thread and coloured silks on ivory satin, 18 x 25cm [NWHCM: 1929.134]

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CHAIR'S LETTER

Dear Members and Friends

Welcome to this – the third in our occasional series of themed publications. This sumptuous Journal is the work of Jeanette Durrant, who took on the editor role for this edition. She, and her team of colleagues, have shared with us their love of embroidery, and I thank them for producing an authoritative body of work of which we can all be very proud. Thanks also go to the team at Carrow who enabled photos of the collection to be reproduced and finally to Maggie for her painstaking work on the layout.

Our Anniversary year has been quite remarkable with the highlight, of course, being the successful four months of displays at the Assembly House. During that time so many of you have stewarded, staged exhibits, assisted with events or visited the displays which has provided our committee with the unique chance of “getting to know you”. Since meeting so many C&TA members it is with much pleasure that I can now say friends.

We hope to give you a review of the themed displays in the next Newsletter, but I can tell you that visitor numbers easily averaged over 70 a day (and totalled more than 5000) and there has been a marked increase in our membership numbers.

The C&TA could not have done this without the generosity of the Assembly House, who gave us the use of the gallery, and the Norwich Town Close Estate Charity whose grant made it possible to acquire the staging materials.

One of the delightful unexpected rewards was to see visitors' delight with costume and the sharing of the many memories which the garments provoked. Young children, and the not so young, were astounded at the layers of underwear. It was especially pleasing to be visited by groups with their teachers.

This hectic year has had inflexible deadlines with much to achieve. Your committee have carried out their roles with humour and grace and I thank them for their hard work and support.

Looking forward to mid-November, what could be finer for a dedicated costume addict than a day at a Vintage Fair? This year it is twice the size. So do join us – there is plenty to see and tempt you.

Now for the icing on our celebratory cake: the reopening of Carrow House. There will be much to enjoy in 2010.

All good wishes and a Happy New Year to you,

Vivienne .

Support from Carrow House

Thanks go to Ruth Battersby-Took, Ruth Burwood and Lisa Little at Carrow House for their enthusiasm and the encouragement they have given to individual contributors, for providing information and access to the collection. (NWHCM denotes an item in the Norfolk Museums Service Collection.)

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THE EMBROIDERERS' ART

British embroidery has long been ranked with the best in the world, producing a rich heritage of decorated textiles, which is characterized by a willingness to experiment with new ideas and materials. It is so much a part of our life it sometimes goes unrecognized as an art form, and it is only possible in this Issue to pick out the highlights. Unfortunately, some methods have been missed out entirely, but it is hoped to whet the appetite to see more, and introduce a few of the treasures found in Norwich, as well as some of the artists and craftsmen who are in this region. Although Norwich was not a centre of embroidery in its own right, Carrow House has an outstanding collection of textiles and costume and an exceptional library covering every aspect of clothing, textiles and design.



Detail from panel 1300 AD
"Christ charging the Apostles"



Woodcut - Prickling & Pouncing, 1527, Alessandro Paganino

Embroidery has been defined as decorating a woven or felted surface with needle and thread, although today it can be embellishing anything in any way that can be stitched, dyed or bonded. It is not essential, but has developed from the practical need to piece cloth or skins together, and the universal drive to ornament or identify the person, the embroidery replacing ancient tattooing or body painting. It is not a big step from strengthening seams and repairing tears, to adding symbols against evil spirits or to show status and identify individuals or groups. The ability to piece skins as protection from the climate enabled ancient man to migrate and survive all over the world. Neolithic fragments of cloth made from linen and wool show decorative stitching which would have been made with bone needles, and later Queen Boudicca (AD60), was said to wear a fur-lined mantle of embroidered skins.

Unfortunately, textiles do not survive hard wear and climate well, and only a few early pieces remain. Many were cut up and reused and the gold and jewels unpicked. What does remain often shows a high degree of skill, and was probably made for a special gift or occasion, so has been treasured and carefully kept. Our knowledge of textiles is very dependent on written descriptions in inventories, literature and wills and portraits with carefully detailed costume.



Handstitching is as individual as handwriting, and on a large piece it is possible to see where one person stops and another begins. It requires practice to sustain a consistent standard of work, and judgment and sensitivity in mixing colours and textures. People have always enjoyed the rhythm of stitching as a relaxation and some amateurs are as skilled as the professionals; the difference being a professional can handle difficult materials and work consistently to a deadline.

Jeanette Durrant

All Seasons Frontal, St Andrews Hingham, 1987, appliqué and metal thread. H 122cm x W 460cm (4ft x 15ft) Jeanette Durrant



CHRISTIAN AND MEDIEVAL

The Romans brought Christianity to Britain in 54 AD. Early vestments were simple and based on secular dress in order to blend into the community during persecution in Rome. In 553, Pope Gregory sent missionaries to Britain to re-establish monasteries and introduce church ritual in the Roman style. They despised the Celtic church, which was outgoing and scholarly, thinking it barbaric. By 681 all of England had been converted to Christianity, which acted as a stimulus to artistic expression.

The spread of Christianity increased the need for vestments decorated with symbols and insignia. Early Opus Anglicanum (English work) dates from the 8th century with records of gifts being sent to Rome. It was valued for its technical skill and originality and independence of the Continent. Precious stones, pearls and metal threads were added to both ecclesiastic and ceremonial robes of state as symbols of status and wealth, until gradually the decoration became so great that the stitching was merely functional, holding them in place. The cloth was covered completely; the wearer became a moving piece of sculpture.

To produce consistent quality and quantity, it would have been necessary to divide the production into specialist skills, the more experienced teaching younger ones, and the more able concentrating on using the most expensive materials. Several people in various cities could work on different parts of a commission. The embroiderers did not make up the vestments, which was done by tailors.

The ability to work with gold thread was especially prized and well rewarded. A stole, found in St Cuthbert's tomb in Durham c 910, with strips of pure gold on a silk background, is remarkable for the fineness of the work - 16 threads to 1/8 of an inch - and shows there must have already been a tradition of skilled work and

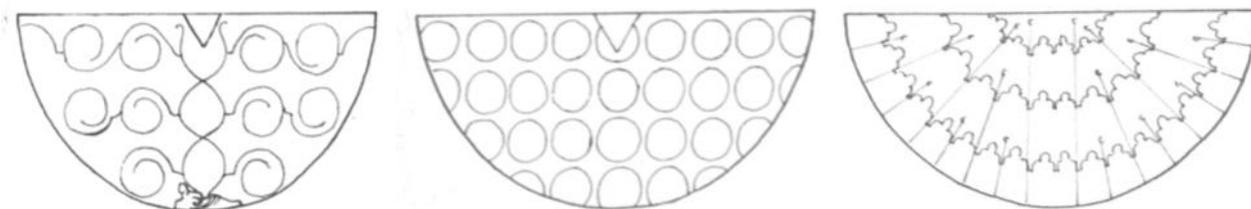
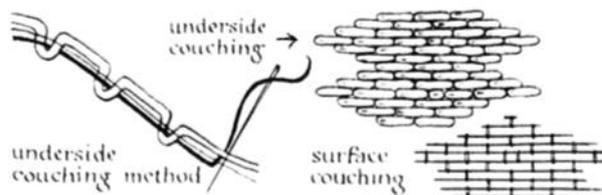
organization. Silk and gold would have come from trade with Cyprus and Venice. In medieval times both men and women worked in the workshops, often with an Abbess in charge who had royal connections as embroidery was taught in noble households and monasteries. Patterns and designs were shared by all the craftsmen, and the decorative arts reflected the Psalters and architecture of the time. Artists were employed by wealthy patrons and the church, and teams of artists would travel from city to city producing pattern books for lesser workshops. The "East Anglian School" stretched from Canterbury to the Wash with centres in Norwich and Peterborough, which were famous for their work on manuscripts. Important areas for embroidery were in Winchester and London but not East Anglia. The 13th century saw the start of craft guilds. Apprentices served for seven years and were all men, with one apprentice per craftsman. Faulty work would be destroyed to retain high standards.

English woollens and worsteds were plain at this time so costumes were often decorated by embroidery, which gradually became so elaborate that in 1364 sumptuary laws were passed to restrain it, forbidding anyone below a certain income to wear bejewelled costumes.

The Bayeux Tapestry illustrating the battle of Hastings in 1066, provides a vivid social document of the times with the borders designed by the embroiderers containing animals, people and motifs. It was commissioned by Bishop Odo of Bayeux soon after the battle and was almost certainly made in Canterbury workshops supervised by Queen Matilda, wife of William of Normandy. It is an embroidery over 230 feet long and 18-20 inches wide, (70 metres x 50 cm) stitched in vegetable-dyed wools on linen using four colours. The shapes were filled with laid work and the hands and faces outlined with stem stitch.

Source: English Embroidery by Barbara Snook, Mills & Boon 1969

Geometric divisions of copes designed to ensure figures remain in a vertical position when worn.





Detail of Great Bircham Norfolk cope, c1480, converted into an altar frontal at a later date showing how the design tapered, couched gold threads on red velvet [NWHCM: 1939.75].



St Gregory's Fishmongers Pall, c1500, two details, [NWHCM: 1971.1.7.T]

Dolphin swallowing a fish in couched gold threads on black worsted background with groundwork of red silver cords.

Above the dolphins on the pall, one of five angels floating on a cloud holding a soul in a shroud.

Opus Anglicanum and methods

During the great period of Opus Anglicanum between 1250-1350 AD, embroidery was exported all over Europe with London the centre of trade financed by bankers and merchants. Copes, chasubles and altar frontals reached the height of artistic achievement and were the envy of Europe. They were prized for the quality of workmanship and design typified by the facial expression of saints, using a spiral of closely packed split stitch in silk thread to give a sculptured effect to the face and hair. The figures were all from the New Testament, and illustrated the Bible for people who could not read. A design framework allowed the copes to be shaped towards the shoulders, keeping the figures upright when worn. Structures such as quatrefoils, Tree of Jesse, or arcading, were filled with saints and angels with the Crucifixion or Virgin Mary and child on the centre back. The ophreys down the sides of the front were often stitched in canvaswork featuring the coat of arms of the patron.

Underside couching was used for important pieces and was unique to England. It was very time-consuming to work, but gave copes great flexibility and outlasted surface couching. Strips of pure gold wrapped round a core of silk thread were laid on a surface of silk or velvet, and a tiny loop of gold pulled through to the back with small stitches of linen thread.

The outbreak of the Black Death in 1349, the 100 years war with France, and domestic unrest, led to a decline in craftwork. Imported Italian brocade was cheaper and quicker to use as a background than embroidery, resulting in simpler methods.

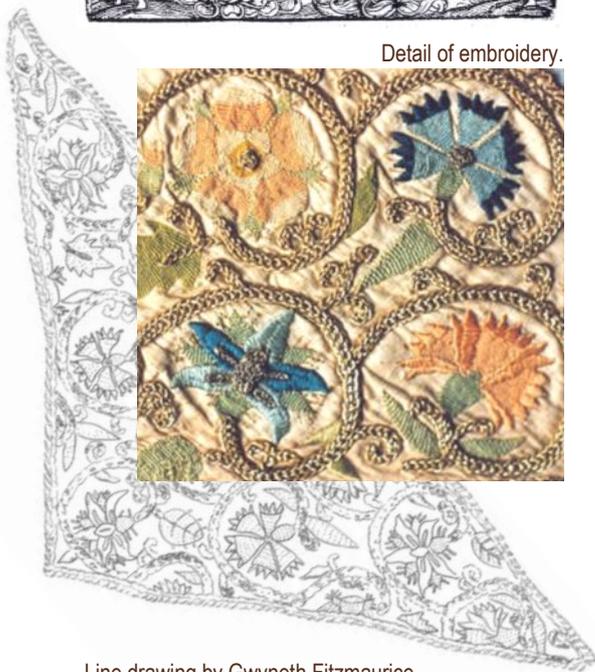
Examples of Opus Anglicanum can be found at the V&A, but Norwich has the Bircham Cope (1480) with Seraphim's and double-headed eagles, and the St Gregory's Fishmonger's Funeral Pall (1517) with angels and dolphins These are outstanding examples of late medieval goldwork.

The development of full armour gave rise to heraldry in the mid 12th century, enabling monarchs and titled men to be identified by appliquéd symbols on their banners and surcoats during wars and tournaments. Heraldic devices were hereditary and subject to strict rules and used on badges and civic seals.

TUDOR AND ELIZABETHAN



Detail of embroidery.



Line drawing by Gwyneth Fitzmaurice

Henry VIII was a true Renaissance man with a great interest in culture and learning and an enthusiast for pageants and tournaments. His love of gold on costume and in woven hangings is illustrated in portraits attributed to Hans Holbein, and his marriage to Catherine of Aragon created a fashion for blackwork. Designs were strongly influenced by oriental carpets and Moorish strapwork patterns. The new printing presses of Gutenberg (1455) and William Caxton (1476) were reflected in a fashion for black and white.

The Reformation (1529-36) brought an end to Catholicism as the national religion, and the emphasis in embroidery changed from ecclesiastic to domestic. This was mainly done by amateurs with the professionals concentrating on ceremonial, heraldic work, teaching, and designing for ladies of the household. The upper classes had great wealth which they spent on fashion and their houses. Buildings were improved with safer fireplaces (Tudor chimneys), larger windows, and formal gardens.

Exploration and trade brought fresh ideas and materials and an upsurge in the interest and cultivation of new flowers. Embroiderers took to the illustrations of flowers and beasts with enthusiasm, copying them from the books exactly, which accounts for the mix of scales. The introduction in Gerard's *Herbal* of 1597 likened a garden to 'a robe of embroidered worke'. Flowers, either sprigs or inside scrolled stems, decorated everything, especially costume, and sleeves and stomachers were often made as a set. Elaborately embroidered sweet bags, purses and gloves were popular gifts.

Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots were good needlewomen. As a child Elizabeth embroidered a Prayer Book for Katherine Parr. During her imprisonment, Mary, in the care of another needlewoman Bess of Hardwick, made many embroideries. Oxburgh Hall has hangings by Mary and Bess with canvaswork 'slips' of sprigs of flowers, animals and mythical beasts taken from Gesner's *Icones Animalium* (1560), appliquéd onto a background of green velvet. Other favourite books in the early 1600's featured Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, which encouraged the embroiderer to mix animals, plants, and insects.

Monarchs had to outshine and impress their courtiers and foreign visitors. Elizabeth was as interested in clothing as her father, spending vast sums on richly embroidered, bejewelled dresses. The open-fronted skirts and elaborate sleeves made ideal surfaces for decoration with symbolic flowers, allegories and emblems of power. These were kept at the 'Great Wardrobe', a government department where tailors and embroiderers were employed to make, mend and clean the Queen's outfits. At her death she left over 1000 dresses.

Top - detail of bodice, 16-17th century, natural linen embroidered in a design of roses in oval frames with gold thread and sequins at junctions, [NWHCM : 1937.165.4]. **Centre** - woodcut from *The Great Herbal*, 1526. **Bottom** - line drawing of triangular shaped forehead cloth, 16th century, embroidered in silks with motifs of carnations, roses, cornflowers, and borage, inside scrolls of gold plaited chain [NWHCM: 1937.165.3].



Above - page from *A Scholehouse for the Needle*, 1632, Richard Shoreyker.



Right - Detail of bench cover, NWHCM: 1971.28, 1500-1600, crewelwork slips on navy serge; turkey, dragon, bear on mound of French knots in woollen thread. In Art of Living Gallery.

CREWELWORK

The charter for the East India Trading Company was granted by Elizabeth I in 1600 with the aim of breaking Portuguese and Dutch monopoly of the spice trade and used Indian cotton goods as currency to barter for spice with Indonesia. Contact between the east and west began as far back as 300 BC with an extensive trade network between China and the Middle East. The 'silk caravan road' ran from Xian in China to Baghdad in Persia via India and was controlled by Turks and Arabs, but opened up to Europeans under Mongol free trade from 1250-1350.

As part of trade exchange in the mid 17th century, the East India Company imported Indian palampores and pintadoes (painted calico hangings) to England as bed-hangings, but although they were admired for the colourfast dyes produced by Indian mordants, they were too alien for western taste. English textiles, which were already influenced by European parodies of Chinese decorative styles going back to 13th century tales by Marco Polo of a mythical land called Cathay, were sent out as samples for Indian craftsmen to copy or adapt. They interpreted these into their own traditions which in turn had already been influenced by China and Persia. The result was an exotic hybrid of styles, which finally led to Indian chintz.

Although crewel embroidery had continued since medieval times, it became very popular for bed hangings, covers and curtains in the 17th and 18th centuries. It was worked in a two-plant vegetable-dyed worsted wool on a linen or wool twill background. The bed was of particular importance and status, becoming almost a room within a room. Heavy curtains,

valence and covers were made as a set, often by the lady of the house and her family circle, using the services of the 'pattern drawer' to design and outline the motifs for them. Kits were an old idea, sometimes worked from a pre-drawn pattern or chart, sometimes with the more difficult areas already done. At the same time as the ladies of the house were working on crewel embroidery, their daughters were busy on stumpwork cabinets.

Crewelwork can be dated by distinctive styles.

Mid 17th century pieces were mainly monochrome using red, blue or black threads with large repeat motifs of flowers and leaves covering the whole surface. Later 17th century pieces have separate motifs of animals, insects, fruit and flowers, or trees on small hillocks scattered in a variety of scales over the surface.

The final most elaborate style in the early 18th century used a large variety of stitches and fillings worked in a vigorous lively way, on a linen-twill background, and was a mix of English, Indian, and Chinese design. This consisted of branching trees on Chinese style hillocks with birds of paradise sitting next to parrots and squirrels. Heraldic beasts, rabbits, caterpillars and native flowers on the base originate in Flemish verdure tapestries.

Jeanette Durrant

Summer Meadow II, crewel stitches and fillings on dyed fabric, 25cm x 28cm, (10in x 12 in). Jeanette Durrant



BLACKWORK



Fig. 1 - *Portrait of Captain Thomas Lee*, 1594, Marcus Gheeraerts II, [561/2-1636] © Tate, London 2008. A character of some notoriety, Capt. Lee wears a splendid blackwork smock.

The history of blackwork embroidery is long and varied, dating possibly from before the time of Chaucer until the present. However, it is in the sixteenth century that it was arguably at its finest, and most fashionable. Blackwork flowered in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. This intricate embroidery of fine black silk on white linen adorned almost all of the wealthy Elizabethan's wardrobe. Surviving textiles are relatively few, but there are many detailed portrait paintings from the period as evidence. In particular, artists like Hans Holbein II (1497/8-1543), George Gower (d.1596) and Marcus Gheeraerts II (1561/2-1636) have left superb records of Tudor and Elizabethan fashion in embroidery. (Fig. 1)

The basis of blackwork embroidery is a simple straight stitch worked over counted threads in geometric patterns. The Tudors used it as a reversible double-running stitch to work delicate lace-like border patterns on collars and cuffs. This stitch was known later as Holbein stitch, perhaps as a tribute to the

accuracy of his paintings.

During Elizabeth I's reign, blackwork developed into all-over designs of patterned and stylised motifs of flowers, fruits and leaves, which were set either on scrolling stems or within interlaced bands of strapwork. These motifs were outlined and filled with geometric stitch patterns (diapers) based on the original single straight stitch, or simply shaded with speckling stitches. Printed herbals and the Elizabethans' love of gardens can be seen as major influences here, and the choice of motif was often symbolic or even political. The stems and strapwork were worked in buttonhole, braid, stem or chain stitches.

A coif from the Carrow House collection [NWHCM 1959.306.1], presently at Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery, has an all-over trellis design enclosing roses, carnations and pomegranates with silver-gilt thread detail. A man's nightcap [NWHCM 1956. 109.C] shows a typical scrolling design of flowers and fruits. The smock /chemise was an important undergarment for both sexes.

The bodice of a lovely smock [T.113-118-1997] c.1575-85 at the Victoria and Albert Museum is densely embroidered with exquisitely-patterned pomegranates, flowers and leaves. (Fig. 2)

Blackwork was also used for household linens, but more rarely for pictures. Carrow House has a needle-etching of a

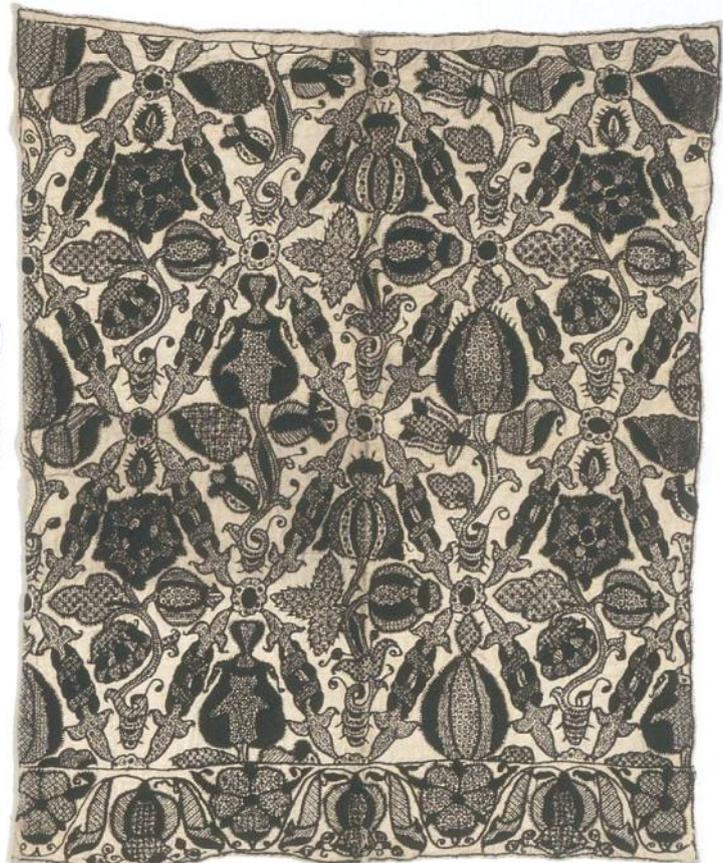


Fig. 2 - Smock, English [T.113-118-1997], 1575-85 – detail © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3 - *The Ruins of Athens*, 1805, stitched by Ann Roper to a design by John Crome, ([NWHCM:1942.127.3:T].

milkmaid with cows and sheep, which uses speckling stitches in black thread [NWHCM : 1929.13.T] (see page 16). Gradually, blackwork was overtaken by multicoloured silk embroidery and crewelwork in the seventeenth century.

Early nineteenth century printwork, or “black and whites”, was a popular revival of blackwork to imitate engravings. An embroidered silk picture *The Ruins of Athens* [NWHCM:1942.127.3:T] in the Carrow collection (Fig. 3) uses a mixture of couched-down ravellings with straight and speckling stitches to suggest tone and texture. It was stitched in 1805 by thirteen-year-old Ann Roper of Marlingford Mills to a design drawn and shaded by John Crome (1768-1821), founder of the Norwich School of Artists.

Later in the century a revival of interest in historic English needlework led to detailed research into blackwork, and the making of close copies. Blackwork reappeared on household linens well into the twentieth century, with embroiderers observing strict rules of reversible stitching

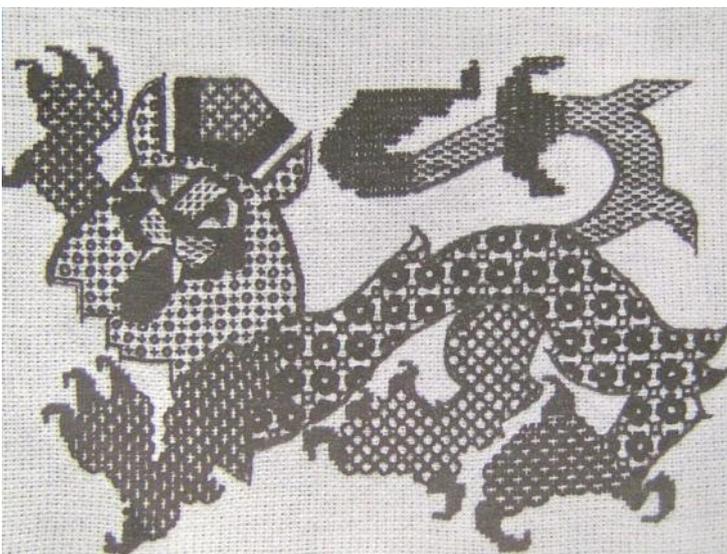


Fig. 4 - Embroidery designed and worked by Elisabeth Geddes, 1955, and given to the Embroiderers' Guild Collection by the Needlework Development Scheme. Embroiderers' Guild – Leaflet No.10 *Blackwork*. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the Embroiderers' Guild.

and strong outlines.

From the 1930s, the method was taught through the Needlework Development Scheme. In the mid-1950s, there emerged a new Elizabethan blackwork embroidery, using a freer approach to embroidery design developed by Elisabeth Geddes and Moyra McNeill to exploit the rich tonal and textural values of traditional diaper patterns. (Fig. 4) Their new and lively stylised contemporary designs were still worked to the counted thread, but the diaper patterns had no outlines and took on a descriptive quality enhanced by varied threads. Later, and not unlike John Crome's shading, other embroiderers carried experimentation further with the use of dyes with stitch. (Fig. 5)

By changing materials or even the technology, today's embroiderers have found new ways with blackwork. Lesley Barnett has embroidered blackwork stitch patterns in silk which appear to melt into handmade felt in her panel *From Black to White*. Lisa Little has brought blackwork into the computer age with her recreated Elizabethan jacket worked entirely by machine to a traditional pea-pod design. This is now at Strangers' Hall, Norwich. The history of blackwork seems to be bound up with the embroidery - perhaps that is its fascination.

Jenny Daniels

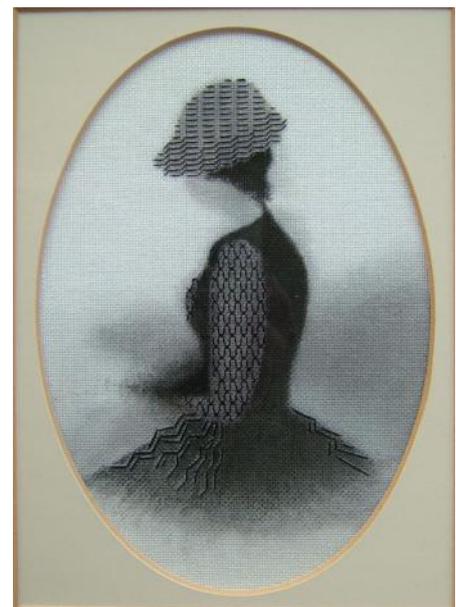


Fig. 5 Study of a Lady, after Georges Seurat, 1989 Jenny Daniels (author's collection).

STUMPWORK, PAST AND PRESENT



King and Queen panel, 1625-75, ivory satin background worked with coloured silks and metal purl. Note the wired hands. [NWHCM : 1975.89:T]

Origins of Raised Work

Stumpwork is the Victorian term for what the original makers would have called raised work. Raised work is also an accepted modern term.

In England this kind of embroidery was popular in the latter half of the 17th century. It is thought that most of the raised work panels found in English country houses and museum collections today were worked by young girls as the culmination of their embroidery training. Early examples of raised work are found on the Continent in ecclesiastical embroidery, guild ceremonial and court dress. The work was carried out by professional embroiderers. English embroiderers from the 16th century occasionally had padded and detached motifs. Some haberdashers may have sold ready printed designs together with a selection of materials as an early form of embroidery kit. Panels could be made into boxes or mirror frames and showed Classical, Old Testament Biblical, or Royal Court scenes.

These mixed media panels have a bas-relief surface. Some have suffered surface deterioration and so it is necessary to imagine how vivid they would have been. Fine needlework is evident in surviving pieces. Figures were surrounded with motifs of birds, animals, flowers and insects. Houses, castles and pavilions together with sun, moon and clouds featured in the backgrounds. The foregrounds often depict statues, fountains and pools with fish. Exotic animals such as lions, leopards and camels shared

Detail from panel showing *The Judgement of Paris*, c 1660. The goddess wears needlelace clothing richly decorated with seed pearls. The hands are made of carved wood and the faces of padded silk, [NWHCM : 1951.71:T].



Lion detail from *King and Queen* panel. Spaced buttonhole filling with textured wire mane and fur over padding.



space with dogs and rabbits. All the figures were dressed in contemporary dress. Designs for flora and fauna were taken from printed books and herbals. Scale is lost in the wealth of images, which are representational rather than realistic.

Materials used include fine linen and heavy weight ivory silk for backgrounds, fine linen canvas for slips (motifs worked separately and then applied to the background). Wool, bundles of linen or horsehair were used for padding. A variety of threads including silk, wool, gimp, metal threads, braids, painted and silk-bound purl, and silk wrapped vellum strips were used. Other materials used to embellish the work included beads, seed pearls, coral, precious stones, spangles, hair, leather, feathers and mica. Faces and hands could be made of carved ivory, bone, wax, wood or padded satin. Hands were also made of silk wrapped wire. A variety of techniques were used including laid work, metal thread work, needlelace and flat work stitches.

Carrow House holds an interesting collection of fine stumpwork panels. Some are illustrated here.

Contemporary raised work

Modern embroiderers use raised work as a means of creating naturalistic images as well as imagined and humorous scenes. Books on raised work techniques by embroiderers Muriel Best and Barbara and Roy Hirst were published in the late 1980s and 1990s. City and Guilds and other courses have made the techniques more widely available. In the last decade books by authors such as Jane Nicholas, Kay Dennis, Daphne J Ashby and Jackie Woolsey have encouraged interest in raised work.

Embroiderers now combine traditional and new techniques to great effect. Backgrounds are created of calico decorated with silk paints, machine embroidery, quilting and layered organza. Materials such as felt, polyester stuffing, craft Vilene and balsa wood are available for padding. Some detached elements such as petals, leaves and wings are fashioned from wired, machine-embroidered organza. Slips are made from machine embroidery on dissolvable fabric. New materials and methods are combined with traditional padded techniques and needlelace.

Conclusion

Close examination of historic pieces shows a range of technique and use of stitch, which still delight us today. The textural possibilities of embroidery in bas-relief have inspired a new generation to explore this traditional English form of embroidery.

Sue Leonard and Helen Durrant

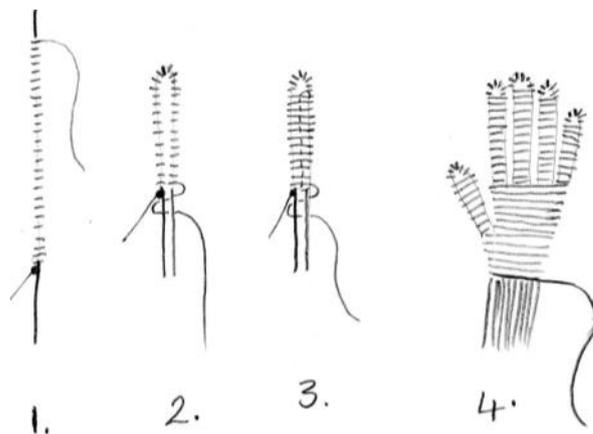


Diagram of technique for making wire hands.

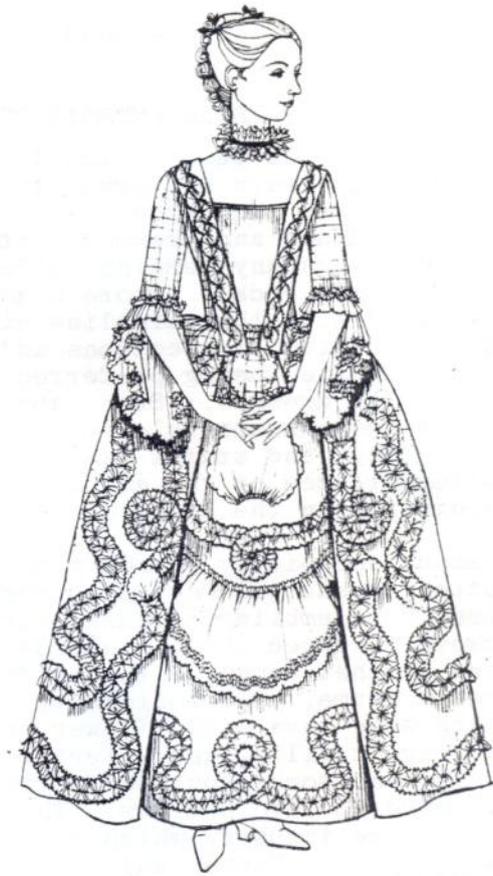


Beetle with beaded wings by Sue Leonard 2008.



Millennium Casket by Daphne Ashby and Jackie Woolsey. A modern interpretation of 17th century design.

YELLOW IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT



Frills and Furbelows line drawing by Ruth Bartlett from the exhibition catalogue *Strangers Hall*, 1981. [NWHCM:1951.92.CH2:C]

Detail of dress in Art of Living Gallery. [NWHCM: 1942.40.CH20:C]



In the new Arts of Living Gallery at the Castle Museum, Norwich, is a wonderful sack-back open robe with a matching petticoat in a glorious Chinese-yellow silk grosgrain (1750 – 75). This style of women's clothing was very popular throughout the eighteenth century – the Age of Enlightenment. Artists from Hogarth and Gainsborough to Watteau and Zoffany have left a rich record. The dress silhouette changed through the century: from extremely wide skirts supported by panniers and back pleats falling from the neckline (*robe à la française*); to a neater closed robe with the pleats fitted at the waist (*English gown*); and ending as the *polonoise* with the petticoat visible again made popular by milkmaids and Marie Antoinette.

Chinoiserie was an important decorative theme in the eighteenth century - and the fashion of yellow may have been inspired by its exclusivity to the emperor. The silk is still surprisingly vibrant today. It was probably dyed with weld or fustic, as the more intense (and economical) quercitron, extracted from the bark of *Quercus velutina*, was not introduced until 1785. The robe is embellished with furbelow trim in the same fabric - pinked scalloped edges, pleated, frilled, manipulated into recurring 'flowers' winding across the surface of the robe and petticoat in fashionable rococo style. Shaped yellow ruffles edge the elbow-length sleeves, and removable whitework ruffles take the fabric elegantly down to the fingertips.

Spitalfields silk brocade was an equally fashionable fabric for sack-backs. Anna Maria Garthwaite (1688 – 1763) sold her painted watercolour designs (now in the V&A archives) of branching flower stems, based on botanical illustrations, to Spitalfields weavers. The resulting silk brocade, already rich in design, was often trimmed in self-fabric furbelows and lace made of silk and metal. There is a superb example in Carrow House [NWHCM:1951.92.CH2:C]. Inspection of this overdress (1770) not in a display case facilitates research into the entire dressmaking process – from fabric construction to repairs and alterations.

Surface trimming was almost certainly made in professional workshops and to order. Correspondence from a customer in Bedford (1764) includes instructions for the detail of pinking and scalloping trims for her sack-back dress. As with men's embroidered waistcoats in the eighteenth century, pattern pieces of a garment may have been embellished in workshops, in London or Paris, and the garments made up locally. It is unlikely that gifted amateurs, even though very skilled at decorative home furnishings and accessories such as pockets, aprons or stomachers, undertook such work.



Mrs Delaney (1700-88) may have been unique in the completion of her embroidered gown.

And so back to the yellow open robe. The stomacher is missing, and there are no portraits on display in the Castle to indicate how they filled the 'gap'. The Costume and Textile Study Centre at Carrow House may not match the advert (1735) for "Weatherfield's wholesale stomacher warehouse ... now selling a variety of the newest patterns..." but there is one box of beautiful embroidered examples.

Stomachers were a triangular piece of stiffened and decorated fabric joining the two robings at the front of the bodice and covering the stays. Depending on the length they could alter posture and the ability to sit down. Fabric tabs sometimes attached them by pins or lacing to the inside of the robings. Layers of fabric with either false or corded quilting later replaced early boning. Embroidery designs were usually floral with a background of handstitch vermicelli. Two in the Carrow collection look as if they could 'go' with the displayed yellow open robe. If so, attachment marks would confirm the match. However, knowing the attention given by Norwich curators – if either were correct, one would be there!



The first [top and middle : NWHCM 1933.121b] is dated 1700 and embroidered on two layers of natural plain-weave linen with silk dyed threads in a symmetrical floral design that 'fits' the shape. Tulips, rose and carnation, with central and side stems with leaves, are worked in a mixture of chain stitch, single chain spotting, satin stitch, laid fillings, bullion knots and are inspired by crewelwork. The background is filled with yellow backstitch vermicelli, which stops short of an unbound border partially marked with paint. There is no evidence of any attachment or use.



The second [bottom: NWHCM 1929.42:C] is dated 1700 and is two layers of natural plain-weave linen, quilted in yellow silk backstitch. Stylised symmetrical designs of leaves and flowers are marked by lines of backstitch giving the appearance of corded quilting. The edges are bound by yellow tape with tabs for attachment to robings and marks indicate it was worn.

The resource available at the Castle Museum – displayed textiles and decorative arts – with the collection archived and stored at Carrow House plus its unique library, stimulate and support research at all levels. It never fails to surprise and delight.

Jan Miller

WHITEWORK



Infant's cap with hollie point decoration on white cambric 'SWEET BABE' [NWHCM :1945.126.2]

This is to introduce you to the whitework in the Carrow collection - to inform you of the great variety and to enthuse you with its style and quality. It might seem that white on white does not make much of a statement, but consider the play of light of the thread against the ground fabric; the contrast between the dark cut areas and the ground; the delicate fillings and the bold embroidery. One marvels too at the skill of the stitcher, counting threads and weaving designs with a needle.

An early example is a seventeenth century sampler showing a brilliant spread of exquisite stitching, with its bands of lacies, bold satin counted thread, pulled work and unfinished reticella with backing vellum still in position. Scaled down this technique can be seen in an infant's cap (opposite top). Note the smocked and gathered areas.

From the eighteenth century there is a decorative apron in fine muslin, tamboured with a graceful stylish design derived from the commedia del arte columbine, pierrot and a tree of life. There is also a man's waistcoat front in corded quilting with pulled work and seeding, uncut, with pocket flap in the piece. What a dandy he would have looked if this had been made up.

Bedcovers provide an area to showcase designs. From the eighteenth century there are covers with corded quilted baskets, flowers and ropes of leaves at the borders, all showing up in relief. One in particular has a peacock as the central motif with a parrot in each corner with a fringe made from knotting, a craze of its time.

On a finer scale look at the controlled passion and expectation worked into a band of hollie point lace on an infant's cap. A wonderful example (above) of buttonhole filling with the design and letters created in the voids. See the decorative bullion knots.

Dresden work is an eighteenth century technique made to imitate lace using pulled stitches and shadow work on fine linen cambric or cotton muslin, with satin stitches and double back stitch inside flowers and scrolls of leaves. There are amazing collars, ruffles, aprons, cuffs and lappets with a different fine, intricate design in each filling.

Ayrshire work was developed from this, particularly for infants' caps and christening gowns, using a firmer muslin produced in Scotland. The Carrow House collection has a christening gown with a traditional triangular panel on the bodice front, and skirt with separately attached and embroidered frills at each side. It is a beautiful example of buttonhole and pulled work fillings, with the flower centres like a spider's web using a fine lace thread, each surrounded by padded satin stitch. This work gave much needed employment to women and children who worked on different parts of the process. They were known in Ayrshire as the Flowerers.

From Ayrshire work there was a progression to eyelet embroidery and Broderie Anglaise (bottom right) with no fillings. Hand work was being overtaken by the machine in the 1870s. There are examples of hand and machine work



Infant's cap bands of reticella worked across the front and to the crown on coarse natural linen. [NWHCM :1894.24 CH1]



Nightdress case, 1850-1900, white cotton satin in Mountmellick work using thick soft white cotton with motifs of blackberry, barley, etc. [NWCHM : 1969.374.9]



White linen oval broderie Anglaise bread cloth [NWHCM :1961.488.20]

in petticoats, child's dresses, tablecloths and mats.

Nineteenth century styles of work linked to economic conditions, especially in Ireland at the time of the potato famine, include Carrickmacross lace and Limerick lace, Irish crochet and Mountmellick work. The night dress case (middle left) shows the country influence with blackberries and barley stalks worked in thick white cotton thread.

Early in the twentieth century there was a similar need to provide work in depressed areas in the Northern dales and Durham coalfields. Quilted bedcovers, with traditional patterns of pineapples and feathers in beautiful regular stitching, were made by clubs, and after 1928 sold to Liberty's in London. Think of the chat and gossip while these covers were being stitched.

Other techniques in the collection are Teneriffe wheels, cutwork, shadow work, Russian drawn ground, smocking and Hardanger.

There are drawers all round the country full of beautifully worked whitework on drawn thread mats, pulled work tablecloths, embroidered damask napkins, sprigged muslin collars, hairpin crochet table centres, cutwork tray cloths and the like, all surplus to everyday requirement and laundry time. Perhaps only contemporary embroidery worked in white will add to the range, but for now enjoy all the wonderful whitework in the collection.

Linda Wix



19th century Dresden motif showing pulled work and satin stitch.

18TH CENTURY

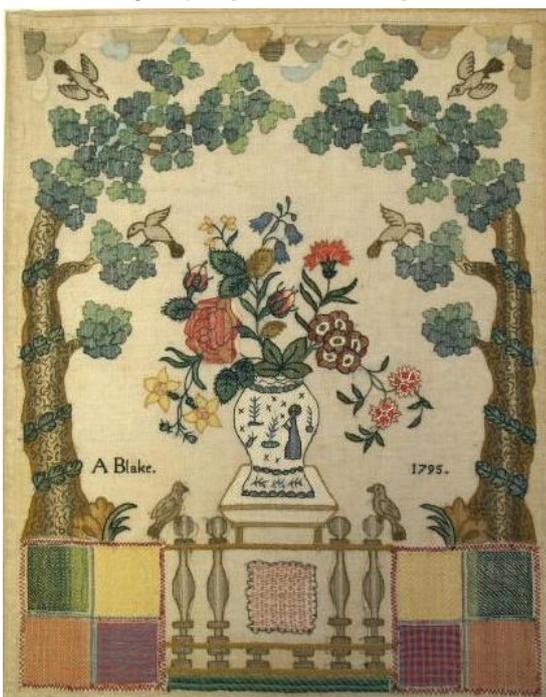


Needle etching of milkmaid and cows, 18th century, worked in black silk thread on a silk background, [NWHCM 1929.13.T].



Shepherdess, 18th century, canvaswork in tent stitch, H 20cm x W19cm, (8in x 8in), [NWHCM : 1922.135.1]

Pattern darning sampler, [NWHCM : 1928.98].



Grand tours of Europe produced a new elegance in architecture and interiors by the Adam brothers and Christopher Wren, and the heavy baroque crewelwork of the 17th century gave way to lighter more open designs.

After Elizabeth's long reign, there was a century of rapid changes of monarchs and governments. The Stuarts (1603-1714) continued to wear lavish costume with collars and ruffs of elaborate lace and Dresden work, which was set off by the rich silk of the clothes. By 1730, the mantua, an open fronted court gown, had exaggeratedly wide panniers at the side. It was either made of the finest silk brocade or heavily embroidered, with a matching petticoat and elaborate stomacher. By the middle of the century wealthy men's costume was as lavish as the women's, but their embroidered coats and waistcoats gradually evolved into the perfectly tailored suits of Beau Brummel at the end of the century.

A renewed fashion for quilting clothes and furnishings began, using linen and fine cottons from India, often combined with drawn thread and pulled work. Flat quilting over two layers was known as *Queen Ann* and gently sculpted the surface which could be quilted with metal thread, or combined with corded quilting. Wadded or *Durham quilting*, was worked in three layers with a woollen padding for warmth. By 1740, quilted petticoats became a garment in their own right and worn for traveling. Men's white quilted waistcoats with areas of pulled work are among the most beautiful and elegant examples of English embroidery.

Marie Antoinette's 'milkmaid' fashion for aprons became part of the costume, either in satin or fine tamboured muslin. Romantic outdoor scenes with shepherdesses were reproduced in canvaswork, bead, and needlepainting pictures.

Printed books of patterns sparked a new interest in samplers, which were worked as part of a girl's education between the ages of 6–11, culminating with a stumpwork cabinet. Samplers recorded all methods of embroidery and often included alphabets and religious texts with floral borders. The early samplers show the sequence methods were taught and were a tool for learning. Norwich has a good collection of samplers, especially pattern darning, which resembles weaving, and has echoes of hand decoration on early shawl borders.

Jeanette Durrant



Line drawing of coat and waistcoat of full dress suit, 1770-80, deep purple woollen cloth embroidered with flowers and leaves in cream and pastel-shaded silks, further decorated with square mirrors and blue and green pastes. [NWHCM : 1916.87].



Man's waistcoat, c1760, salmon pink brocaded, vertically satin striped silk front, embroidered down fronts, around hems, pocket surrounds and on pocket flaps, with white festoons and trailing flowers in blues, greens and reds. [NWHCM : 1953.95 : C]



The men's embroidered suits and waistcoats are considered highlights of embroidery.



Apron, 1700-1750, pink satin embroidered with formal flowers and leaves in couched silver thread, edged with elaborate tasseled silver thread fringe, [NWHCM : 1957.364.CH1 : C].
Line drawing detail by Jeanette Durrant.



Detail of Dresden lace cuff, 1700-1800, [NWHCM : 1938.42]

VICTORIANA



Berlin work chart



Canvas slipper upper in Berlin work, roses on black ground, [NWHCM : 1961.424.5]



Berlin work slipper
[NWHCM : 1967.1]

Tea-pot stand stand, 1825-75,
flush work outside and canvaswork
tent stitch inside in purple and
green, [NWHCM : 1957.174.3.T]



During the 19th century great strides were made in science and medicine and a new middle class of wealthy merchant bankers and businessmen emerged. The Industrial Revolution brought power driven machines to factories, and improved transport by rail, canal and roads. An industrial sewing machine for producing embroidered fabric by the yard was invented in 1829 in Switzerland and in 1863 the Schiffli for chemical lace (embroidery on a dissolvable background). The Cornely machine in 1870 imitated tambour work with a chain stitch and the first Singer sewing machine appeared at the 1851 exhibition and was later used in trade schools.

About 1810, Ludwig Wittich, a German painter and engraver in Berlin, started printing charts for canvaswork on point paper using symbols for colours. These were then hand-coloured by pieceworkers as indicated by the symbols and a craze for 'Berlin woolwork' started. Charts were expensive so were swapped or loaned. Designs featured floral sprays of full-blown roses, arum lilies, pet dogs and parrots, copies of paintings, and scenes from the Bible and novels by Sir Walter Scott.

In 1840 it was estimated there were 14,000 patterns in circulation, which were exported throughout Europe and America. At the same time, a vegetable-dyed soft airy Merino wool yarn was produced.

The charts appealed to wives of the middle-class who had time and money to spare and servants to do the housework. In 1856 William Perkin patented aniline synthetic dyes and a new colour mauve became available. To modern eyes the colours appear strident and clashing, but at the time would have seemed vibrant and exciting. The Victorians seized on them with enthusiasm and covered everything possible in canvaswork, from men's slippers, braces, smoking caps, and waistcoats to teapot stands, pincushions, cushions and fire screens for the home, which later included some with beads and plush work.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the charts were published in magazines and canvaswork was overtaken by cross-stitch and 'crinoline ladies'. Following the 1851 exhibition at Crystal Palace, William Morris instigated the Arts and Crafts Movement with the aim of reviving the standard of design. The Royal School of Needlework was founded in 1872 with leading architects and artists producing designs for church and coronation robes.

Jeanette Durrant

20TH CENTURY



Ann Macbeth - collar in Art Nouveau style,
[NWHCM : 1970.171.71]
In Art of Living Gallery.

Societies, art schools, and movements proliferated in the early 20th century and embroidery was taught as a profession and an art form. It was an era of inspiring teachers such as Constance Howard, Margaret Nicholson, and Jessy Newbery, whose legacy is a new generation of teachers and acknowledged textile artists.

Ann Macbeth, a teacher from the Glasgow School of Art, (1875-1948), wrote books for children on needlework and crafts. She was a pioneer of modern embroidery and her work is recognized mainly by Art Nouveau designs of appliqué edged with satin.

Beryl Dean MBE (1911-2001), a student from the Royal School of Needlework, revived ecclesiastic design and re-introduced the skills of Opus Anglicanum. Commissions include copes for St Paul's and three altar frontals for St Margaret's Kings Lynn.

Jeanette Durrant



Composite detail: *Evacuation from Dunkirk* by John Craske a fisherman from Sheringham, known for his crewelwork pictures of the Norfolk coast and this 11ft panel, which has parallels to the Bayeux Tapestry. [NWHCM: 1944.126]

21ST CENTURY TEXTILE ARTISTS PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

Visitors to contemporary exhibitions of embroidery are often puzzled by how work that has no stitch, no fabric, or is even just a video, can be described as textile art. If the roots of the work can be traced back to a textile starting point, and is done by someone with a textile background, the description is justified. Many artists who can hand-stitch, or are excellent colourists, choose to use digital print, or work in pure white or black for that particular piece. Another time, another piece, they may use a riot of colour, or project giant stitches that can be walked through. They choose the method and materials most appropriate to the idea they want to express. Interestingly, viewers with no textile training often have the least difficulty understanding or enjoying the work. These days the boundaries between the different disciplines in art are being broken, just as they were in medieval times.



Marjorie Budd

In the Tall Grasses

Hand stitching on a silk and organza background.
H.28 x W.20cm (11 x 8ins)



Jo Budd – textile artist. Marjorie's daughter.

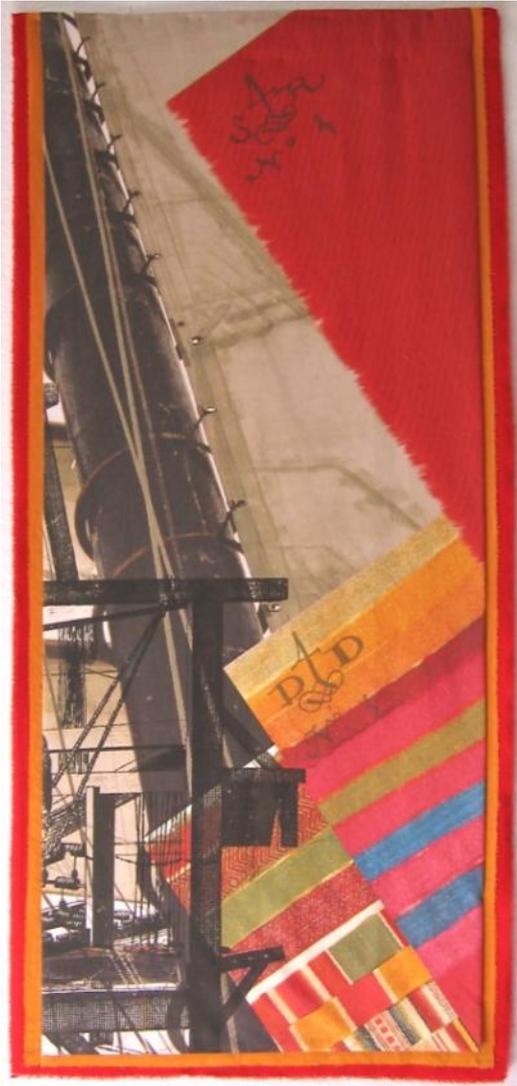
Summer/Female under construction H.171 x W.313 cm.

Cotton and silk organdie, silk crepaline - rust and Procion dyed, layered over mixed cottons, silks and synthetics. The surface will be manipulated with tiny anchoring stitches that honour the dyed marks and produce a ripple of movement and light on the surface.

Sister piece to *Winter/Male* commissioned for the V & A's permanent collection. Both pieces will be exhibited in *Quilts 1700-2010* from March 20th to July 4th 2010.

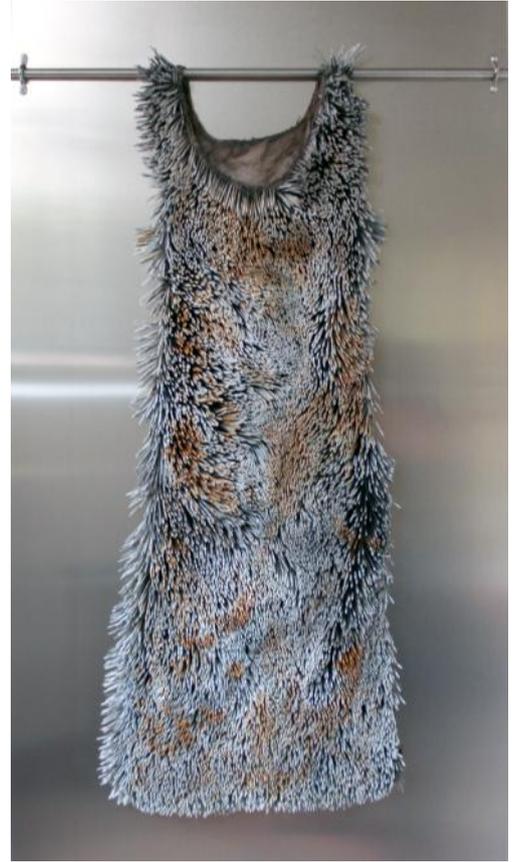
Jo pinning pieces onto the backing ready to hand stitch.





Jeanette Durrant
Woven Cargoes
 H. 125cm x W. 56cm.

Digital print on calico representing the 18th century trade of Norwich textiles.



Louise Richardson
 Artist maker.
Telling Tales making the unwearable.
 A contrast of materials, muslin and nails on a steel base, using 15,000 nails.
 H 150 cm x W 76 cm

Jan Miller - Shelf life

Shelf life narrates the overlooked labour of unknown workers. Layers of marks left by seamstress and owners in a nineteenth-century mourning dress record a history of its making and wear. Mixed media; dyed and handstitched papers and fabric. 120 x 83 x 12 cm.



Jean Mould-Hart - Spanish Gold - inspired by a visit to Cordoba, Spain. Hand made paper, patch-worked together and enriched with gold leaf, scraffiti and print marks. 51 cm square



YOUNG PEOPLE AND EMBROIDERY

Although I have come to embroidery later in life, I regret that opportunities were not available for me to explore embroidery when I was much younger. I feel that I have missed out on opportunities to express myself and explore the wide range of techniques and materials that are available.

It is important that young people are encouraged to explore their creativity through embroidery and learn how to use a wide range of materials to express themselves through the use of stitch, threads, beads, felt, sweet wrappers - the possibilities are endless.

The Embroiderers' Guild and its local branches make sure this happens through the support given to Young Embroiderers' Groups. Norwich Young Embroiderers meet once a month and members of the Norwich Branch of the Embroiderers' Guild give their time freely to ensure that the young people have a wide range of projects to stretch their imaginations and skills.

The helpers, or the 'big girls' as we are known, learn a lot from the young people. The projects that we start with often take on a life of their own once young minds get to work. Fabric beads start as necklaces and become mice and insects,

scraps of material become banners and bags. Even if the projects are not finished in our sessions they are proudly brought back to show the group the next week.

The adults involved also learn from this fresh and innovative approach; in the way that the young people use colour, design and texture, taking time and care to achieve the effect they want.

Schools also need to play a part. Stalham Junior School's recent Art Week gave the whole school the opportunity to take part in a range of activities that included felt making, quilting, making and decorating clothes and umbrellas, all things that used skills from embroidery.

It is up to all of us to make sure that young people have the chance to take part in activities that let them explore the wide and exciting art of embroidery. They are the people who will make sure that embroidery skills will be enjoyed and valued by future generations. I, and the other 'big girls', have learnt that it is a privilege to help young people to learn about the joys of embroidery. We know ourselves that even when they leave Young Embroiderers, they don't leave embroidery behind and can always come back to it.

Diane Gilbert

These Banjara bags were made by the Young Embroiderers at their April meeting led by Sue Leonard.

The Norwich Young Embroiderer's Group started about 30 years ago as an offshoot of the main branch. Ages run from 8-16 and members have won many prizes for their work. Several have gone on to take diplomas and BA degrees. It is presently run by June Splitt and Jean Moore and meets about once a month at Colman Junior School. For more information contact: 01603 714638.



C&TA EVENTS

VINTAGE FAIR

SUNDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2009

Blackfriars Hall, St Andrews, Norwich
10 am—4 00 pm Entry £1.00

Our second Vintage Fair, twice as big and twice as long. Vintage costume, bags, jewellery and so much more. Over 30 specialist traders.

Get that special gift for Christmas.

Spring Coach Trip to London

Visit the Victoria & Albert Museum on Saturday 24 April 2010, to see an exhibition of 300 years of British quilting, from the spectacular bed hangings and silk coverlets of the 18th century, to the creative reinvention of the quilt by contemporary artists.

The cost of the return coach journey to London is £20.00, including coffee en route to London.

Admission to the exhibition is not included, members will need to make their own booking.

Booking Form - Spring Visit to London Saturday 24th April 2010

No of seats _____

Total payment: £ _____

Please make cheques payable to C&TA and include a stamped addressed envelope.

Pick-up point:

Notcutts Garden Centre / Castle Meadow

(Please cross out the one you will **NOT** use.)

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone no:

Email address:

If you are booking for more than one person , please give the names of additional people. Post to Events Secretary, C&TA, 70 West End, Old Costessy, Norwich, NR8 5AJ. Any queries ring Barbara on tel: 01603 745766 or Email: andyandbarbara@waitrose.com

NEWS FROM CARROW HOUSE

The Museums Service will be celebrating the re-opening of Carrow House by kicking off 2010 with a packed programme, open to the general public, of workshops, talks and events. There's something of interest for everyone. Events will include monthly talks on costume and textile themes, delivered by a range of speakers. For those of you who like to try something new, we will be offering monthly, practical, themed workshops based around our collections and covering everything from; 'how-to-sew' for beginners, beadwork, buttons and braid through to embroidery, lace, patchwork and pockets!

We also hope to encourage browsers and those of you who want to find out more about what we do, by hosting 'Open Saturdays' during the year. On top of this, you can expect the return of the highly popular 'Under Wraps' event. The full Carrow House events programme will begin in January 2010, with more details and booking information becoming available later this year. Check the C&TA website and local press for further details.

Ruth Burwood and Lisa Little, Curators

JANUARY 2010 - EMBROIDERY MONTH

Tuesday, 5 January 2.00 - 3.30 pm*

Friday 8 January 10.00 am - 1.00 pm*

Friday 29 January 10.00 am - 12.00 noon

Saturday 30 January 10.00 am - 4.00 pm

Talk: Textile Tour of Norfolk, Linda Wix

Workshop - Embroidery, Lisa Little

Underwraps

Open day drop in

FEBRUARY 2010 - FELT MONTH

Tuesday 2 February 2.00 - 3.30 pm*

Friday 5 February 10.00 am - 1.00 pm*

Friday 26 February 10.00am - 12 noon

Talk: to be confirmed

Felt making workshop, Gwyneth Fitzmaurice & Lisa Little

Underwraps

MARCH 2010 - LACE MONTH

Tuesday 2 March 2.00 - 3.30 pm*

Friday 5 March 10.00 am - 1.00 pm*

Friday 26 March 10.00 am - 12.00 noon

Talk - to be confirmed

Workshop - Lace making, Leslie Sercombe

Underwraps

There will be a charge for all items marked with *. All events take place at Carrow House.

Bookings taken by the Museums Service from 1 November 2009 onwards. Telephone 01603 493625.

OTHER EVENTS

Norfolk Record Office

The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DQ
September—20 November 2009

Admission free

A public exhibition displaying Norwich pattern books and NRO documents illustrating the Norwich textile industry from the eighteenth century. Included are records of the textile manufacturers, Stannard, Tailor and Taxtor along with items less well known, such as a sale catalogue of the cargo of a captured ship, which includes a list of the Norwich stuffs on board and the prices they fetched at auction in 1779.



Maddermarket Theatre

DRESS TO IMPRESS

All seats £4.00 - Ticket Office tel: (01603) 620917

Wardrobe mistress Amanda Greenway leads three more special discussions focusing on the process of staging a Maddermarket show from a costumier's perspective. These events will take place in the auditorium, with each providing a special behind-the-scenes insight into the show which follows later that evening. 'Dress to Impress' has proved hugely popular over the last year - come and find out why!

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN - Thursday 29 October 6 pm

I AM A CAMERA - Thursday 26 November 6 pm

TOAD OF TOAD HALL - Friday 18 December 6 pm

Missing records

Help please. Can you complete our records? We are missing some agendas, treasurer's reports and the minutes of our AGMs for the years from 2000 to 2004 inclusive. Please contact Jeanne on 01603 451160 or email jeannesouthgate@bopenworld.com if you can help. We are planning to send a record of our first twenty years to the Norfolk Record Office for safe-keeping, once we have a complete set of papers. If necessary, we would take copies and return originals.

Storage of C&TA Handling Collection

Until Carrow House was closed for refurbishment some time ago, C&TA had a small space there which was very useful, both for meetings and storage. We have now learned that this facility will not be available when Carrow reopens. So we are now looking for a suitable home to store our 'handling' collection. We need at least 12 square metres and could pay a nominal rent. Please contact Jeanne if you have, or know of, suitable space.

CONTACT DETAILS

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Membership: 01502 731094

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE NOVEMBER 2009

Guest Editor - Jeanette Durrant
Kitty Temperley, Maggie Johnson

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