



TextileMatters: **Red Work**

A Bath Spa University Textile Research Centre symposium

Speakers and Abstracts

Rachael Howard (Speaker and Co-Convener) is the Red Work exhibition artist.

Rachael is a British textile artist particularly known for her figurative, printed and embroidered narrative textiles. She has been a successful practising textile artist and designer since leaving the RCA in 1992 as one of the first postgraduate students of Embroidery. Since then she has become one its most respected practitioners. Her graphic, lively sketches of everyday life typify her powers of observation and knack for catching the moment. Rachael's work is in held in many public and private collections including the Crafts Council and the Embroiderers Guild.

Rachael has been Lecturer in Textile Design at Bath Spa University since 2013.

She is currently working in partnership with the Bluecoat Display Centre and the Royal Liverpool Hospital on the "Making a Difference" project. She is artist in residence on the Dementia and Stroke wards, making art with patients at their bedside and aiming to enhance their stay in hospital by introducing positive and creative drawing activities.

www.rachaelhoward.com

www.bathspa.ac.uk/our-people/r.howard2

Abstract: 'Why Red Work? The inspiration behind the exhibition'

Rachael will talk about the day she fell in love with a redwork quilt top that she viewed in the exhibition 'American Beauty: Art from Craft in 19th Century America', at the American Museum in 2009. This remained in her memory until 6 years later when she was invited by Waterside Arts Centre to have a solo exhibition of her work and she finally had the opportunity to produce a body of work inspired by the catalyst redwork quilt. She will describe her fascination with this tradition and look at how it has inspired the work in the exhibition.

She will also reveal the processes of making work for the show, emphasising the importance of drawing. She will illustrate how sketches are translated into textiles using a variety of techniques, including screen and digital printing.



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Jenny Waterson is Learning Curator at Gawthorpe Textiles Collection in Padiham, Lancashire. She works with contemporary artists and makers to create new exhibitions, displays and events inspired by the collection, and created a Sandford Heritage Award-winning schools programme. Until 2015 she was also Exhibitions Curator at Waterside Arts Centre in Sale, Manchester, where she curated a successful textile strand, creating partnerships and securing funding to develop exhibitions, including Red Work, the Arts Council funded touring exhibition by textile artist Rachael Howard. Before working in museums and galleries, Jenny trained as a textile designer, graduating from the Royal College of Art in 1990. She set up and ran an international design consultancy for over 10 years, with clients in Europe, America and Asia.

www.gawthorpetextiles.org.uk

Abstract: 'Curating the Red Work Exhibition'

Jenny Waterson will tell the story of curating the Red Work touring exhibition. She will show how choosing to work with textile artist Rachael Howard for this exhibition supported both the practical and artistic aims of Waterside Arts Centre, as well as her own development as a curator. Jenny will talk about the hands-on issues of applying for funding as well as the curator-artist dialogue that underpins the exhibition. The importance of good partnership relations, with other venues and potential funders, and with media organisations will also feature. She will also talk about the importance of a varied programme of exhibition events to enrich audience experience.

The presentation will conclude with a short look at Jenny's current role at Gawthorpe Textiles Collection and her work there with contemporary artists and makers to tell the story of the collection.



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Katherine Hebert is the Chief Curator at the American Museum in Britain. She has been working with the splendid collection of American decorative arts housed there for over ten years. Among her responsibilities is the care and display of the collection of historic American quilts. She is the co-author of *Classic Quilts from the American Museum* (Scala, 2009), which showcases 50 star pieces from the collection. In her spare time she enjoys making her own quilts, often drawing inspiration from the pieces that she works with at the Museum.

www.americanmuseum.org

Abstract: 'Quilts at the American Museum in Britain'

Hailed as the finest collection of American quilts outside of America, this superb grouping boasts many stunning examples that would rival those within American collections. In this talk Kate will offer a short history of the Museum, focusing on how the quilt collection was created, how the museum cares for it, as well as highlighting interesting details from some of the pieces themselves.



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Dr Melanie Miller is a lecturer, maker, writer and curator. She was the MA Textiles course leader at Manchester School of Art for eight years and also taught on the Embroidery undergraduate programme for 11 years. Melanie studied History at the London School of Economics and Textiles/Fashion at Manchester Polytechnic. She completed her PhD at Manchester Metropolitan University in 1997, investigating the relationship between design, creativity and new technology in the embroidery industry. Curated exhibitions include Mechanical Drawing: the Schiffli Project (Holden Gallery, Manchester, and touring 2007 - 08) and Construct: eight textile artists explore identity at Ruthin Craft Centre, 2014. Research interests focus on exploring the combination of traditional and digital technologies; and issues around gender stereotyping, globalisation and branding. Work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including Global intrigue II 4th Riga International Textile and Fibre art triennial 2010; The Power of Copying, Xuzhou Museum of Art, China 2010; and The Function of Folk, Krakow Ethnographic Museum 2012. Melanie has recently has been volunteering with the ground-breaking arts organisation arthur+martha; and is currently an advisor to the Quilt museum in York.

www.melaniemillertextiles.co.uk

Abstract: 'The place of stitch in the school curriculum: from thimble drill to binca tablemats, cross-stitch samplers to Arduino Lily pads'

Taking the Red Quilt at the American museum in Bath as a starting point, this presentation will examine the role of stitch within children's education in the UK from both a historic and a contemporary point of view.

Although the Red Quilt is American, this investigation will focus on education in the UK. The presentation will be informed by key historic texts such as 'Needlework for Student Teachers' by Amy K Smith, 1899, as well as Tracy Gill's research undertaken for her MA at Manchester Metropolitan University, published in Hand Stitch Perspectives 2012 (A. Kettle and J. McKeating), and a study of Janet Bristow's needlework files completed at Hemsworth Grammar School 6th form in 1949. An evaluation undertaken of a project that took place in a Manchester secondary school in 2015 will provide a contemporary

TextileMatters: Red Work - Friday 8th April 2016

Convened by Rachael Howard and Tim Parry-Williams

Guest Speakers: Kate Hebert, Dr Melanie Miller, Dr Clare Rose, Lynn Settrington, and Jenny Waterson



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perspective (The Ideas Foundation/The Comino Foundation Digital Designer in Residence Evaluation).

Lynn Setterington is a British textile artist particularly known for her hand-stitched cloths and Kantha quilts celebrating the ordinary and everyday. Lynn's work is held in many public and private collections including the V&A Museum, Whitworth Art Gallery, Terrance Higgins Trust, Denver Museum of Art and The International Quilt Study Center, Nebraska, USA.

Since 2010 she has instigated a series of "signature" projects, working with diverse groups ranging from community groups in Rochdale, Lancashire, to craft workers in Gujarat, to refugee school children in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Lynn trained in Textiles at Goldsmiths College. She is a Senior Lecturer at the Manchester School of Art (MMU) where she became a Public Engagement Fellow in 2009 and received a Knowledge Exchange Award in 2013.

She is a member of the 62 Group of Textile Artists, The Textile Society of the UK and an Associate Fellow of the International Quilt Study Center at the University of Nebraska. She is currently working on a practice-based PhD at the University for the Creative Arts (Farnham) investigating collaborative embroidery practices from a maker's perspective.

www.lynnsetterington.co.uk

Abstract: 'Signature Cloths: acknowledging (comm)unity'

This visual essay examines a number of hand-sewn signature cloths, past and present, to make known how these textiles recording individual and group belonging, resonate with society today. In particular the essay shines a light on some of the hidden values and points of tension in collaborative embroidery work from the perspective of a stitched-based practitioner.



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Dr Clare Rose is a textile historian with a special interest in the interpretation of historic textiles. She has published extensively on the history of quilting, notably in *Fabric Intarsia in Europe from 1500 to the Present Day* (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2009). She has contributed to exhibitions and publications for the Victoria & Albert Museum, Berlin State Museums, The Women's Library London, The National Archives and The John Johnson Collection of the Bodleian Library. She is the Lecturer in Contextual Studies for the Degree Program at the Royal School of Needlework, London and also lectures on the History of Dress at the V&A.

www.clarerosehistory.com

Abstract: 'Speaking without a word: quilts as communication'

Contemporary quilt artists like Rachael Howard and the Fine Cell Work group (working in Wandsworth jail) are exploring the potential of pictorial quilts to give insight into other lives through a combination of carefully selected imagery, refined draftsmanship, and meticulous stitching. The potential of stitched quilts to communicate with viewers was well understood in the past. The 'redwork' quilts that inspire Rachael Howard were made collaboratively, with motifs selected to refer to shared interests or in-jokes, their meanings deliberately obscure to outsiders. The 'Bible quilts' popular around the same time had much clearer messages; they were made by church groups for homeless shelters, in the hope that the scripture texts on them might inspire residents to reform. Much more radical in their intent were the pictorial patchworks made by professional tailors in the 1830s – 1850s. These were monumental in scale – up to 3m / 10ft across – and mind-boggling in their technical complexity, pieced together out of thousands of tiny scraps of wool cloth. The imagery chosen was ostensibly patriotic and populist: Queen Victoria and her court, theatre stars, and exotic beasts. But there were also subversive choices: Wat Tyler, leader of the peasant's revolt, and characters from an anti-slavery drama. At a time when workingmen were excluded from citizenship, these carefully worked panels acted as testimony to their makers' skills and their intellectual capabilities. Exhibited in public to thousands of viewers, they embodied the principle



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that motivates modern 'Craftivism': stitch can communicate in a way that is deeper than words.

Tim Parry-Williams (Co-Convener) is a practicing weaver whose primary focus is materials. Initially trained at Farnham (now UCA) and later in Japan, he has worked on an extensive portfolio of projects with leading designers and makers, industrial partners, traditional craft weavers and museums, contributing to collections, exhibitions, conferences, and development projects around the world.

Tim is currently Course Leader, MA Design: Fashion & Textiles; and Acting Course Coordinator, MA Fashion Portfolio, Bath Spa University; Visiting Professor, Textile Centre Haslach, Austria; Trustee and Acquisitions Panellist at Crafts Study Centre, Farnham; Trustee, Stroudwater Textiles Trust; and Member, Gloucestershire Guild of Craftsmen. He continues to exhibit and lecture nationally and internationally.

www.bathspa.ac.uk/our-people/T.Parry-Williams

<http://transitionandinfluence.com/gallery/timparrywilliams.html>

Twitter: @timtheweaver
