

## Exhibitions

### **Identity, Art Textiles: Made in Britain Festival of Quilts: National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, England**

For me, this exhibition was the star in an impressive line-up at the Festival this year. It featured some of the biggest names in textile art today: Louise Baldwin, Pauline Barnes, Hilary Beattie, Ineke Berlyn, Cas Holmes, Rosie James, Edwina Mackinnon, Sandra Meech, Stephanie Redfern, Christine Restall, and Jenny Rolfe, all rolled up in a brand new exhibiting group.

Set up as a promotional tool for art textiles in Britain, they have arranged a co-operation with Upper Street Events/Twisted Thread (who run the Festival of Quilts) to stage a brand new exhibition of work on a bi-annual basis and, if this year's premiere is anything to go by, it will be a real crowd pleaser. The mix of artists is very well chosen and, as a group, they run the gamut through paper, stitch, quilting and all forms of embroidery.

The exhibition format was well thought out and the hanging was superb, as you can see here with a view through Rosie James's floating thread drawings to the colourful 'banners' which each artist prepared as a background to the welcome desk. As I say, very well considered.



I have been a huge Rosie James fan ever since I saw her work in a gallery in Stafford a few years ago. Good to see that Batsford have recently published her book.

Another good idea in this exhibition was the use of mood boards all around the exterior walls. In addition to giving an in-depth look at the work of each artist, the statements describing their work gave insights into motivation and deeper feelings. Constraining them all to fit their work into a prescribed shape and size made each statement stronger.

The one shown on the right is by Sandra Meech. It shows some of the techniques used to great effect by this artist – digital prints, lettering, in the form of handwriting and a profound sense of storytelling. I like the fact that a photo of Sandra is included in this, her own story, setting her into the landscape that gives her inspiration.

It was fascinating to see how the individual artists handled the theme of identity. Louise Baldwin worked the theme by looking at how our brains form connections and links. Random patterns, plant forms, even arithmetic float around our minds and serve as inspiration. I like the way she showed these links – sometimes as connections in her floral pieces (detail below) and sometimes as a neural network, shown at the bottom of the page.

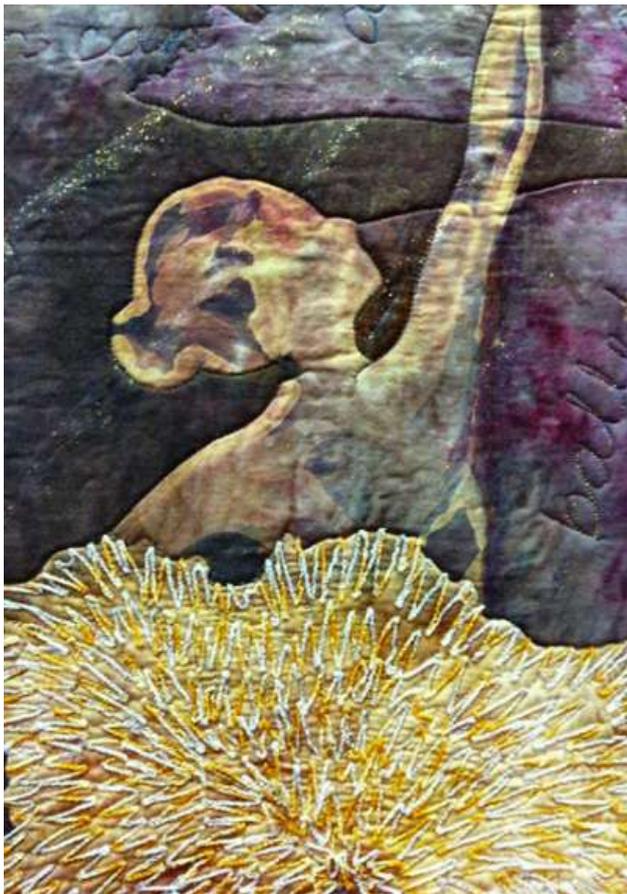


Hilary Beattie is a very brave lady as well as a very talented one. She makes no secret of her lifelong battle against depression and her exhibit, *Keeping a Score For Life*, shown right, uses pages from a depression inventory which has helped her to cope with this insidious enemy within. The painted pages are collaged with meaningful ephemera, providing a history of past and present events which have led to her current state of truce.

Pauline Barnes looked at the theme through images of her professional identity. Her early years as a dancer were beautifully expressed, as you can see from the quilt shown below (with detail). A study in good design, it conveyed the excitement and joy of movement but also held a sense of sadness in the muted colour scheme. Her further panels encapsulated her years as a dressmaker and finally the discovery of textile art.

This was a strong premier from a very select group and, although I felt the theme was interpreted more successfully by some than others, it was a first-rate exhibition and I can't wait for their next outing.

Maggie Grey



.....and the best of the rest of the Festival

There were some real treasures in the competition categories this year, and they came across the board. In Quilt Creations, a wonderfully stitched bowl by Linda Turner, *Splash*, was beautifully created with stitch and innovative shaping. See below.

I loved the *Goldfinch* triptych by Chloe Redfern. Beautiful imagery and stitching. Bottom left



Another worthy winner was in the Young Quilters/Young Embroiderers' 12-16 section with Millie Ayers's quilt *Unwelcome Guest*.

The focal point of a rabbit's face poking out from the stitched and printed foliage drew the observer in and its use of colour and patterning through dyeing was very imaginative.

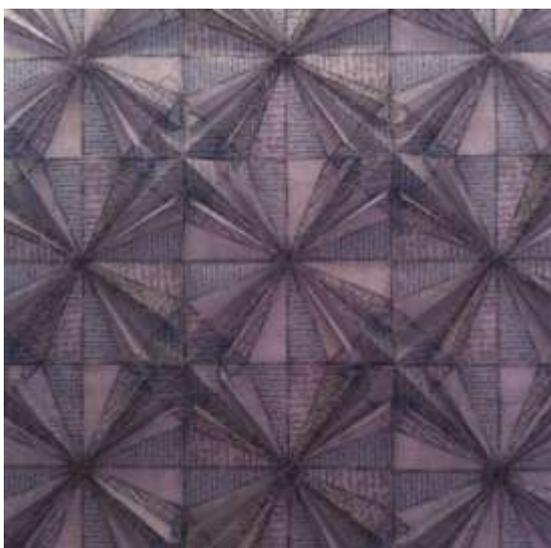


Back to Quilt Creations and the winner of this category, Kate Crossley, had created an unbelievable piece of work in her *Clock*. Fully functioning and finished to extraordinary detail, this was a piece that people were flocking around for the entirety of the show.

The body of the clock was stitched and distressed and held a multitude of secrets and treasures. It was breath-taking to behold and was very worthy of its accolade.



The Fine Art Quilt Masters was a sizeable gallery space which showed off the larger pieces, including Jo Lovelock's *Amicitia*, below left, which was beautifully pieced and stitched, and Marian Hall's quilt *Barge in the Mist*, below right.



In addition to the Art Textiles exhibition, there were many other galleries with work that could not be missed. The Quilters' Guild Contemporary Quilters on the theme 'Dislocation' produced some great work. These works by Anne Tuck (*Slipped Disc*), Jill Packer (*Organised Chaos*) and Liz Smithbone (*Scoliosis*) caught the eye.



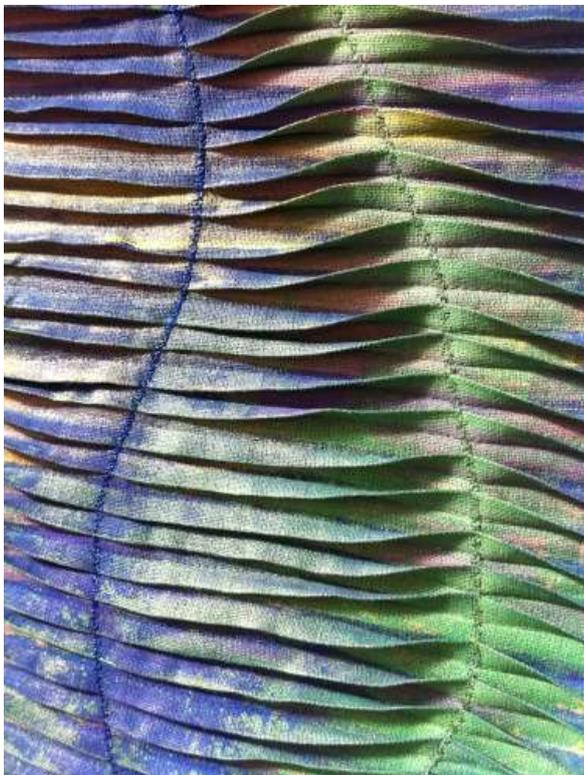
Another exhibition I loved was the Anglia Textile Works – 'Joining Forces'. There was a high standard of work here from a group of ten textile artists who produced some fabulous quilts. *Norfolk Squall* by Sheila Cetti and *Carnival* by Yvonne Brown stood out for me



If you are into colourful quilts, there were many to choose from. I particularly loved this quilt, *Windblown* by Maria Elkins, right, in the SAQA People and Portraits exhibition.

This quilt was featured on the cover of 'People and Portraits', a book edited by Marth Sielman, and it was wonderful to see it, with the workmanship, in real life.

Ineke van Unen's quilts had the most beautiful brightly colours (below left) and *Autumn* by Marlene Cohen in Linda Seward's exhibition included thousands of hand-cut leaf shapes to create this wonderfully flowing quilt – below right.



There were so many more quilts we couldn't include in the round up, which reflected the high standard of work both in the competition and the exhibitions. I felt it was a very strong show this year with lots to admire, envy and covet.

Samantha Packer

**Body of Work Textile Artists  
The Gallery Upstairs  
Upton Country Park, Poole, Dorset**

This was a lovely exhibition by a group of four stitchers. Sue Fenwick, Chris Hepburn, Annette Jones and Jennie Pickering. The four friends decided to form themselves into a small group because: 'We felt we all knew each other well enough to be able to try some really strange textiles experiments without anyone laughing!' An excellent reason for a new group.

The name derives from an early design exercise in which each member of the group lay down on a long roll of paper while their outline was drawn. This was then borne off and colour and pattern were added – see right.

This was a lovely exhibition to visit on a sunny day, with each artist playing to their strengths and producing colourful, varied work. From Jennie's summery beach huts to Annette's delicate exploration of Victorian wrought ironwork, below right, and not forgetting the mastery of stitch displayed in the work of Chris and the sense of colour that Sue always brings (below left), it was a delight.

This was quite a huge space for four people to fill and they were able to make full use of a large sales table which was proving a great draw for the holiday makers who were out in force.

