

CETG ARCHIVE

Meeting Report

11th June 2018

Speaker: Nicola Jarvis

Talk: Designing for Embroidery: a tale of two patterns

NICOLA JARVIS "THE PENCILS EXCELLENCY-THE DESIGN AND STITCHING OF A CONTEMPORARY CASKET IN THE 17TH CENTURY STYLE"

(this title, on screen, was different from the talk as originally advertised)

Nicola Jarvis is a well-known designer and embroiderer who trained at the Royal school of Needlework. Following that, she designed many embroideries and kits for them. She became fascinated with historical embroideries from the 16th and 17th century after visiting the V & A's textile collection. Her eye was particularly caught by the "Layton Jacket", a sumptuously embroidered jacket covered in goldwork as well as coloured silk motifs. Nicola travelled extensively between 2007-2010 to visit embroidery collections in the UK and abroad, to research, draw, and photograph various objects.

Drawing is very much part of her path to understanding how a piece is put together. She particularly favours coloured pencils and acrylic paints and showed us several exquisite patterns and drawings she had produced as a basis for various kits and embroideries. Many ideas have come from motifs seen on stumpwork mirror frames, caskets and panels, including some where designs have been drawn out, but the item remains unfinished.

Designers and embroiderers had a new wealth of printed patterns and motifs to use from the late 16th century, as beautifully illustrated books on plants and animals became more widely available. Many such books were produced by artists who had travelled with explorers and so could provide drawings of exotic flora and fauna. Nicola showed some patterns by Robert Nelham, for example. Many designs for boxes included a central cartouche, often of figures from contemporary life or the Bible, meant to convey a moral. These would be surrounded by floral and animal motifs, fantasy castles and grottos with a pool sporting fish or a mermaid. Most of the motifs conveyed a meaning to the viewer.

Interestingly, the basic method for transferring designs to fabric has remained the same throughout the past few hundred years - placing the framed fabric near a light source and tracing it. Embroiderers used many different threads, including silk-wrapped wires, coiled to make "purls" and spangles, the early equivalent to sequins.

A few years ago, Nicola ran a course at the Ashmolean Museum in 17th century embroidery. This proved so popular that she was persuaded to design a casket lid

for the group to work. This featured an oak tree (a motif taken from a 300-year-old oak in Nicola's garden) plus surrounding floral and beast motifs. The group all used the same design for the top but each wanted to make a whole casket with other designs relevant to them, so they ended up completing many unique designs. Each casket was then made up in wood by the Museum, who kindly subsidised the woodworking. They were exhibited last year and will also be on display at this year's Knitting and Stitching shows.

The title of the talk refers to the fact that, while the exhibition was called "The Needle's Excellency", Nicola mainly did the designs, embroidering only a lid herself, and so she has substituted the word "Pencil". There were glorious photos of both ancient and modern drawings and pieces of work, plus close ups of some of the lovely finished caskets. This was an excellent and absorbing talk.



Liz Smith's Announcements at the meeting

Pat Fleming Award

How many of you have started to think about your 'G' project? I really would love you all to have a go. This time it's not a competition but an opportunity to try something new. You have until the October meeting to do it.

Hampden Court Trip

Tonight is the last chance for you to sign up for the trip to Hampden Court - 4 places left. If you want to go but haven't signed up yet, please do so. Jackie will give out details of where and when we will be meeting.

Website

Fiona Brown has been working hard to get up to speed with the CETG website. The meetings section is now up to date. The website is doing its job, as I had an enquiry from an interested lady this week.

Workshop

I think there are still places for the in-house workshop on the 30th June. If you want to take part, please make sure you see Judith Gibson or Terry Stevenson.

Library

Please make use of our extensive library of books and DVD's, available at every meeting.

Stitch Group

I have to say the new stitch group is going well and I would encourage anyone else who is interested in forming a mini group to do so. I have found it a great way to get to know some of the members better. If anyone wants to set up another group, please let me know and I will help as much as I can.