

CETG ARCHIVE

Meeting Report

12th December 2016

Speaker: Matty Smith

[Matty Smith](#) gave a fascinating talk on the history and techniques of tapestry weaving which forms the basis of her [Weavers Bazaar](#) business set up with Lin Squires. The earliest known origins of tapestry weaving go back to the third century BC in Turkey, Persia and Mongolia, its first use being as a floor and subsequently a wall covering. The greatest European tapestries were woven in France and Belgium for decorating cold castle and mansion walls, and during the 14th to 17th centuries it was the textile craft par excellence, woven by male professionals. Designs were formulaic, with iconographic motifs such as unicorns; animals, trees and people looked very similar, with no individual character, and spare space was filled with "[millefleurs](#)" - stylised depictions of real flowers. Themes were often biblical to convey religious messages to the largely illiterate population, or secular mythical stories to illustrate the grandeur of the owners. Decline in the craft came with the Renaissance, when tapestries could not compare with the innovations of perspective, depth and the new dye palettes used by the great painters. The technological changes introduced by the jacquard loom dealt the final blow, and the craft languished until it was revived by the Arts and Crafts movement of William Morris.

The modern craft of tapestry weaving sees men and women collaborating as designers and weavers, or design and creation by a single individual. Several artists known for work in other media have also produced tapestries: Picasso collaborated to produce five versions of "Guernica", with amendments made to suit the practical demands of the technique; Henry Moore translated several of the preliminary sketches for his statues into the medium. Matty told the story of Graham Sutherland's "[Christ in Glory](#)" in Coventry Cathedral, which the artist insisted was woven from bottom to top - as opposed to the normal sideways working - which has resulted in repeated restoration as the more delicate wefts have been forced to take the strain of the work which weighs over a tonne and is claimed to be the world's largest tapestry.

Matty showed examples of work by well-known modern tapestry weavers who, in a break from the past, use the art as a means for conveying a personal message. She brought along several of her own pieces for us to examine, along with worked examples of various techniques. There were also a selection of yarns, kits and frames available for members to buy.



Chairman Terry Stevenson reintroduced the new Committee and read out a note from Brenda who is making a slow but steady recovery from her accident at the Knitting and Stitching Show. Twenty four embroidered pieces for the bunting were handed in, and Janet is expecting a couple more, which will all be stitched together, scanned and digitally printed on fabric from which our new bunting will be made. The 2017 refreshments rota was displayed, and will be circulated with the January newsletter. The membership list is nearing completion and hopefully will be ready for January to assist in Terry's plans for small practical groups to get together outside the main monthly meetings.

Entries for the Pat Fleming Rose Bowl Competition are due at the January meeting and all members were encouraged to submit work to share with

the group. As the rose bowl is no longer available for presentation, the committee suggested that the winner would be awarded a book of their choice (price to be decided by the committee) with printed bookplates to commemorate the award. This proposal was met with general approval by members present. The January meeting will be a social evening when members will be making a bottle top pincushion. Remember to bring along a sewing set, a selection of threads and a screw-top wine (or similar) bottle top.

Julia Phillips will be holding a Dye Workshop on 15th January 2017 at the Queens Park Arts Centre from 10.00-16.00. Contact Julia for details. A number of members were dressed festively in their Christmas jumpers and accessories, and Linda Hillyer won the door prize of a voucher to a stitching shop.

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