

Monday 8 September 2025 meeting

Suzanne Ely-Wright - Vibrantly in Stitch

Last night, we were treated to an explosion of colour when Suzanne Ely-Wright came to speak to us. Dressed in a striking vintage outfit that perfectly complemented her vivid orange hair, she was every bit as vibrant as her work. Online, she's known as *Orange Thread Suzy* — and in person, she proved to be a breath of fresh air.



Suzanne shared her journey, beginning with her struggles at school due to severe dyslexia. It wasn't until her textiles teacher, Mrs. Meredith, encouraged her to experiment with paints and fabrics that she discovered her passion. Facing an exam deadline, she reluctantly swapped hand stitching for machine work — despite her dislike of the noise. To her surprise, she came to see the sewing machine as just another drawing tool. School, once unbearable, became her second home.

She filled so many sketchbooks that she needed a trolley to transport them — until, tragically, they were all lost when lightning struck the school and burned it down. To this day, Suzanne prefers working on large, loose sheets rather than sketchbooks.

After school, she studied Fashion Design at Bournemouth and later at the University of Westminster. While she had thrived under the encouragement of her schoolteachers, university proved far less supportive. She never felt her machine embroidery was valued, and after two years she left disheartened.

An internship with Giles Deacon followed, though she joked that the house rabbit received more attention than she did. Happily, she found her footing while working with Zandra Rhodes and Kaffe Fassett — both of whom she loved. Kaffe even offered her a permanent position, but Suzanne realised it would stifle her own creativity. Instead, she returned home, waitressed at a farm shop, and began painting and stitching the produce and animals around her. When her boss hung some of her pieces on the café walls, they started to sell — and her career began to grow.

Suzanne describes her studio as constant chaos but insists that it suits her. She always begins by drawing or painting her subject, then transfers the image onto calico with a biro or Sharpie. To block out the machine's noise, she works wearing large headphones and often watches TV at the same time. Her textiles are layered and ever-evolving; if something feels wrong, she simply cuts it out and stitches in another piece of fabric. From vegetables to birds to human faces, she follows whatever inspires her. She often leaves thread ends loose — both as a visible reminder that her work is textile, and, she admitted with a grin, because it was something her university tutors had hated.



<https://www.instagram.com/orangethreadsuzy/>

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