

CETG ARCHIVE

Meeting Report

11th April 2016

Speaker: Julia Gray

Julia Gray introduced the group to the fascinating world of Japanese and Chinese silk and metal thread embroidery. Inspired by the Royal Society's "Great Japan Exhibition" in 1981 where she fell in love with Japanese embroidery, she gave up a full-time job in television in order to learn how to do it herself. Studying first in the USA and later in Japan she was one of the first batch of foreign students to graduate in the Kurenai-kai "10 Phases" of Japanese embroidery. She was apprenticed in Japan and learnt in the traditional way from the masters by observation where students "steal" the knowledge rather than being formally taught. The range of skills covered every stage, from spinning the silk from the cocoon, through dyeing, stencilling of gold leaf onto fabric to the final stitched work. She also became fascinated by the stories behind the designs and the reasons for colour choices, which are based on the natural world and gardens of Japan.

It was an obvious next step to study Chinese embroidery, which forms the roots of the Japanese art. Chinese embroidery is finer still, sometimes using threads as thin as a human hair, and the background is also stitched. Julia showed some exquisite examples, including double sided designs with a different image on each side. She is a great collector of antique Japanese and Chinese embroideries and showed a selection of these - some of museum quality.

In her own work, Julia has moved on from the traditional oriental designs, to interpretations which may use innovative materials and not conform to the traditional rules. Some of these works formed the basis for her book "Traditional Japanese Embroidery: Techniques and Designs". She shared with the group a poignant piece she had stitched in memory of a friend, featuring delicate pink blossom and butterflies, which represent the spirit of the dead.

Julia is clearly fascinated with the Japanese way of life and shared some amusing stories about how to wear a kimono, the etiquette of gift-giving, what it's like to stay in a traditional Japanese guest house and the embarrassments of Japanese bathing rituals for a Westerner which led to her taking most of her baths in the dead of night.



We enjoyed a milliner's paradise - or perhaps nightmare - as the entries rolled in for the "Mad Hatter's Tea Party" hat competition in aid of [Cure Parkinson's Trust](#). Hats ranged from the chic to the outrageous, featuring full tea-trays, roses and red velvet hearts, a sprinkling of sleepy dormice, feathers, flowers, ribbons, chessboards and more. They will be judged on Friday 13th May at an event held at Orchard House, Coleshill, which also includes a hat fashion show, designer millinery talk and a themed "tea and fizz". Tickets are £25 and can be bought from 01494 765953 / 725042.

The next group outing will be to the [Warner Textile Archive](#) on Friday 8th July. The cost will be £20 to include access to the archive, a talk on the history of the collection and tea with home-made cakes. The collection includes 100,000 textile items and 60,000 paper patterns. The reduced cost this year is due to CETG paying for the coach transport out of group reserves. At the time of writing, a few places are left and those wishing to go who have not signed up should contact Jackie Connors.

Janet reminded those present that three new committee members will be required from October: Chairman, Treasurer and Minutes Secretary. She called upon everyone to consider seriously if they would be able to fill any of these posts, as without the requisite number on the committee, the group will be forced to close. Last year we were in a similar position, until Janet and Pat kindly agreed to fill in for a year. We are prepared to consider

various options such as a job share, or a shortened period if someone does not feel they can commit for the full 3-year term. We already have an exciting programme lined up for 2016-17; it would be a shame to have to cancel on such interesting speakers.

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