

CETG ARCHIVE

Meeting Report

13th August 2018

Speaker: Isobel Hall

Talk: Felt: Mixed Media and Stitch

Isobel enjoys doing what she wants to do with her embroidery rather than what sells books. This has evolved following serious illnesses that both she and her husband have had, which have led them to re-think their lives. Isobel's work has become very political and not uplifting (her words!) encompassing the plastics founds in our seas, immigrants arriving in boats and other current world issues.

She very much believes in making pieces from scratch. The majority of her work is constrained by size. Her studio is in southern Spain and she stopped making huge pieces due to the difficulty in transporting them. Isobel and her husband travel to the UK about four times a year to exhibit her work and also for her to teach and to give talks to interested groups like ours.

Her current work is an installation to be held at York Racecourse, a Fine Art exhibition. The work is about the death of our seas and will be exhibited on three life-size coffins which will be handmade by Isobel - she did tell us her work wasn't uplifting! Isobel showed us a slideshow of many of the pieces she has made:

"Whitby" - this is a boat made using cocoon strippings (a favourite product). The sail on the ship represents Whitby Abbey. Isobel hand embroiders heavily on her pieces but then likes them to look as if they haven't been embroidered.

"Wreck" - is a wrecked boat made from plant material stitched with hand-tied and twisted hemp. The plant material was woven and laced.

"Scrapyard" was made using the same technique as Wreck.

"Lost Cargo" was made in a similar way to the above pieces but with baskets made from a mould and then a cast and then stitched inside and out.

"Desolation" was inspired by famine-ridden countries.

"All my Possessions" made using sari strips hand-woven and stitched extensively - representing people fleeing one country to safety in another.

Isobel lived for four years in Italy, in Naples. "Florentine vessel and book" echoes Florentine stitch, working round a cast. All sorts of everyday items are used as her moulds - plant pots, yogurts pots, plasticine, fruit (oranges are good and do not get mouldy), watermelon - cut the fruit to the shape you need - eat the fruit and use the

skin!

Other pieces shown were:

"Garden"

"Tree of Life" - using silk rods (her friends' favourite piece). Isobel has a love of all things Medieval in Europe.

"This land is my land" was inspired by The Lady of Shalott. The boat is heavily stitched and then painted to look like a fresco using layers of paint.

"Dance Macabre" is black and white piece and took a long time.

"Scorched Earth" represents the weather in Spain where she lives; they have hardly any rain, only twice a year. It is embellished with insect pods in their natural state.

"Lost at Sea" - using cozo fibres, hemp, cocoon strips.

"No stone left unturned" - made to look like a coiled pot using black plastic tubing covered with cocoon strips, sealed with mod podge which makes it very strong and waterproof inside and out.

"No stones".

"Bubble wrap and paper" came about with the idea of using less expensive things as many of the products she uses generally are quite costly.

"Helmets"

"Yorkshire reliquary box" - a little treasure chest.

"Woven dreams"

"Bluebell woods"

"Let me in"

"Death of our seas"

"End of Fishing"

"PAX - people smuggler"

"Castle on the Hill"

"Coracle"

"Fragile"

"Famine relief"

"Let me out" (very big)

"Blowing in the Wind" - this was a huge piece expressing the time when her husband was in pain during his illness.

"No fairytale"

"Safe journey"

Isobel then talked about some favourite products she uses:

Cozo fibres are bought in sheets and are bleached white in colour. If soaked in water, these can be distorted and won't shrink back into their original shape. She uses this to shape around moulds and these become the basis for her casts.

CMC (actually a thickener for icing sugar) is a powder and is cheap to buy and can be used for all shapes - it's a paste like wallpaper paste but is not toxic so doesn't get mouldy.

A moulding paste that gets harder over the years through air-drying, and can be stitched into whilst soft for up to a year.

She also uses batting, scrim and baby wipes. To seal surfaces she prefers acrylic wax rather than PVA which becomes brittle and is difficult to work with. She uses needles with a large eye, big enough to take the thickness of the thread and occasionally uses dolls needles for very thick threads.

At the end of her talk, Isobel invited us to look at the array of fantastic work she brought with her.





Liz Smith's Announcements at the meeting

We are very lucky to have Isobel Hall with us this evening. I know a lot of you are very excited at having her here. Notices:

1. The Knit and Stitch show outing is on the 13th Oct if you haven't put your name down already make sure you see Jackie before you go home this evening.
2. Workshops - the next workshop will be on the 6th Oct in Gt Kingshill. Its title is 'A Wacky Workshop' It will be run by Janet Edmunds but you can only come if you are prepared to leave all your inhibitions at home and let your imagination run wild! Judith Gibson is taking bookings this evening so get yourself on the list. Julia is also running two local workshops so if you can, get along to take part in those.
3. Request for new committee members - we have two slots available, one Speaker Support and the other a post with no Portfolio. If you are interested in either post but feel that you don't have any previous experience, or you don't know what is involved please come and see me later on or email me if you don't want to ask me in person.
4. Group 62 exhibition - This group is putting on an exhibition in Birmingham until the 9th Sept, and I think it looks very exciting. I have printed out a copy of the leaflet which is at the back of the room.
5. Embroiderers Guild - South, East West Regional Day. Rosemary has asked me to tell you about this event and there is a flyer at the back of the hall.
6. Workaid - Rosemary has very kindly brought in a selection of books mainly about machine embroidery but all textile related, and there is also a box of machine embroidery threads for sale at the back. All donations to go to Workaid.
7. Work done by the group - at the September meeting it would be lovely to see all the work that has been done over the year by CETG members. Any piece of work done at a workshop, or just on your own. I know there have been projects done by some of our sub groups and it would be great to show the entire group the range of work that is being carried by our members. But please remember this is not only a showing of immaculate finished pieces, it would be good see works that didn't quite work or that turned out differently to how you planned. I am very keen to get us all talking to each other and to swop ideas and techniques and that is not going to happen if people show only 'perfect pieces'!