

Working Memories

Contemporary Textile Art



8 - 19 October 2024
fortyfivedownstairs

We would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nations, who have been making art and textiles on this land for millennia. We acknowledge their custodianship of the unceded land on which this exhibition is being shown and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

Working Memories

Contemporary Textile Art

Working Memories is a contemporary textile art exhibition that unites the works of Helvi Apted, Elise Cakebread, Janelle Evans, Rebecca George, Phong Chi Lai, Carolyn Menzies, Tamara Russell, Britt Salt, and Shannon Slee under the theme of memory.

Memory and textiles intertwine with shared narratives. Fabrics and threads are vessels that carry memories of family, place and history. Fortyfivedownstairs gallery is situated in Flinders Lane which was, until recently, the centre of Melbourne's clothing industry or 'rag trade'. This textile history adds a layered backdrop to the exhibition.

The contributing artists use traditional and non-traditional needlework practices and materials in innovative ways within a fine arts practice. Each artist has meticulously worked and reworked textiles and threads, offering expanded interpretations of history, origins and place—honouring the past through preserving its memories while forging new narratives.

Curatorial Rationale

Rebecca George

The theme of this contemporary textile art exhibition is memory. The original idea came from a body of work I have been working on over the past two years, exploring material memory and textiles. The title *Working Memories* refers to the extensive hours of labour dedicated to creating textile works.

The nine exhibiting artists have some existing connections through education, shared studio spaces or previous exhibitions. We exchanged memories of when and how we first learned to work with textiles, sharing personal stories that deepened our collective experience. Many of us have very early memories of learning to stitch from our mothers. I was inspired by a gift of a schoolgirl diary from my grandfather when I was six, from which I taught myself to crochet. All the artists have a long history and deep love of working with textiles. Although we worked independently on our artworks within our own art practices, when we came together, we discovered hidden connections woven through our works. Threads connecting history, family and materials. Within the Western art hierarchy, the medium of textiles has been undervalued. Dismissed as decorative, craft or women's work it was historically not to be found within the gallery's white cubes. Despite this neglect, textile art carries a profound history of protest, of care and of artistic expression. Contemporary artists are embracing textiles because they are deeply woven into our everyday lives. We encounter and touch them daily. Fabrics preserve the memories of those who have worn them.

Working Memories starts with Australian history of conflict and moves through to more

familial and personal memories, although the personal is also political. Elise Cakebread's *Eureka*, is made from clothes of Ballarat women and reclaims the flag in memory of victims of violence against women; which she writes about beautifully. Janelle Evans' work *Whitewashing*, is part of a larger project, *Incarceration Nation* (2006–), which interrogates the history of Australia as a former penal colony for Britain's unwanted convicts and as a place of continued incarceration for First Nations' Peoples. The colonial history of Australia and the continued quietening of First Nations' voices is also addressed by Helvi Apted in her sculpture *Voice Referendum Result*. Britt Salt's site-specific installation *Uniform Thread*, maps the intertwined history of textiles and conflict embedded in the building at 45 Flinders Lane, reminding us of the unseen work of civilians during times of war. For Shannon Slee's work *Lanky Queen Anne's Lace*, she uses her own clothes to investigate connections between textile work, abstracted geometries and plants that hold historical reproductive knowledge. While Slee's work is more intimate, it links to broader political issues such as the control of women's bodies. Carolyn Menzies' work delves into the systems that sustain and reinforce the concept of boundaries, exploring the separation between humanity and nature by examining the divisions among humans, shaped by nationalism, colonialism, and individualism. My work *Material Memory*, is a continued experimentation with materials, working with discarded threads, including from Salt's work, reworking them into vessels and casting in porcelain. Threads and vessels contain memories.

Also using discarded threads and connecting textiles to ceramics, is Tamara Russell's *Threads of Life*. This series centres on the value of textiles and explores the emotive properties of textiles to generate, communicate and preserve memories and create future discourse. Phong Chi Lai has also used reclaimed textiles, containing memories of their previous life as he asks, do we come to being at the moment of our birth or do we come from a time before?

The exhibiting artists have pushed the boundaries of contemporary textile art, with some including text based works. Text and textiles share the etymology of the Latin verb to weave. Personal and political stories and histories have been woven through the works of this exhibition. Using the theme of memory and using textiles as the medium, *Working Memories* explores political, colonial, familial, personal and material memories.

Welcome to *Working Memories*. We hope you enjoy the exhibition.

Elise Cakebread

Eureka, 2024

Eureka II, 2024



Eureka, 2024, detail. Photo by Michael Quinlan.

2024 began with an unsettling atmosphere in Ballarat. The sound of helicopters was overhead and police tape lined the back roads into town.

A woman was missing. Another was killed by her partner. Then a few weeks later, another was murdered – again by her male partner.

Most of us were anxiously refreshing our news feeds hoping for an update. Protests and vigils were held. My female friends and I started to feel unsafe. I paused before walking down a familiar bush track. There was a sense that the whole country was watching Ballarat. What circumstances led to these horrible crimes happening here? What was going on with these young men? Was our town really that exceptional or was it just coincidence in a country where gendered violence was escalating, and the social fabric was tearing?

I kept thinking about the history of the region, of the Eureka Stockade and how it is here where people fought for justice, to be treated equally and ultimately for democracy. I thought a lot about the symbol of this battle – the Eureka Flag.

The Eureka Flag is arguably Australia's most important textile work. It was made by three women, Anastasia Duke, Anne Duke and Anastasia Withers. These women lived on the gold fields and supported the miner's rights. Together they made a flag so oversized it is impossible to misunderstand how strongly they believed in the cause. At 2.6 x 4 metres– it is extraordinary. Pieced together from materials at hand, they sewed it together with 'running stitch' indicating the urgency they must have felt.

The history of gold mining in Ballarat is usually told with much pride. The miners fought against injustice and won; they instigated democracy for this country. But today the abandoned mines pock the landscape, now seen as an insidious threat. When a woman goes missing our thoughts jump to the conclusion, she has been dumped down a mineshaft and will never be found. Simultaneously, the culture of the goldfields is one founded on mateship and camaraderie amongst men – journalist and writer Jess Hill points out, relies on the 'othering' of women to reinforce and perpetuate male bonding. I certainly understood

this dynamic as a young girl at school in Ballarat.

On 'Eureka Day' 2023 – the anniversary of the miner's rebellion – a large group of masked men paraded down the main street of Ballarat in an unannounced and illegal protest proclaiming, "Australia for the White Man!". In a complete misinterpretation of the 'Eureka' meaning, the mob flouted their banners at key Eureka sights. They posed for photos outside the police station and unlike at the actual stockade – the police just watched on impotent or stunned.

On wanting to attend the protests held in Ballarat this year – I could not bear to explain to my two young daughters that we were there to ask for violence against women to stop.

And so instead my protest has been this: I am reclaiming the Eureka Flag. I am reclaiming it for Samantha Murphy, Rebecca Young and Hannah McGuire – the three women killed at the hands of men in Ballarat in 2024. And I am reclaiming it for the true spirit of justice and equality that it represents.



Eureka II, 2024. Photo by Michael Quinlan.

My flag is made from the clothing of Ballarat women, donated and found, it is made from my own clothing, my daughters clothing, the clothing of friends. It is made from silk, satin, sequins, lurex, lace, velvet; the fabrics shimmer with life.

I stitched it by hand – running stitch – making it felt urgent. And it still does.

Artist Biography

Elise Cakebread works across textiles, sculpture, installation and public art. Elise is driven by experimentation within traditional textile processes and techniques. Her work explores materiality, tactility, sustainability, disposability, and ornamentation. Through her artistic process, Elise strives to achieve a form of true abstraction – an abstraction of materials that transcends their original context and significance. By repurposing discarded waste materials into intricate compositions, she aims to strip away preconceived notions of value and utility, allowing the inherent qualities of each material to shine through in unexpected and compelling ways. This approach not only challenges conventional definitions of abstraction but also invites viewers to contemplate the essence of materiality itself, prompting a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things. Elise has collaborated with The Artling, Gorman, Dulux, alt.material, Local/Actual, The Monologlo Group, SPACE furniture and Capella Sydney. Elise has exhibited at Linden New Art, CRAFT Melbourne, The Australian Tapestry Workshop, Design Tasmania, and The Australian Design Centre. She has been a finalist for the Northern Beaches Environmental Art Award and for the KAAF Art Award. Her work has been featured in Vogue Living, Yellowtrace, Grand Designs, and The Design Files. Elise holds a Bachelor of Arts – Textiles (with distinction) from RMIT (2012) and a Bachelor of Creative Arts from The University of Melbourne (2007). In 2022 Elise was awarded the Regional Arts Victoria Creative Fellowship.

Janelle Evans

Whitewashing, 2024

Whitewash

verb

gerund or present participle: whitewashing

1. **Whitewash** : to whiten with whitewash paint (a wall, building, or room) with whitewash. “the brick walls have been whitewashed”
2. **Whitewash** : deliberately attempt to conceal unpleasant or incriminating facts about (someone or something). “most sources prefer to ignore or whitewash the most disturbing aspect of such reports”
3. **Whitewash** : to alter (something) in a way that favours, features, or caters to white people: such as
 - a) **Whitewash** : to portray (the past) in a way that increases the prominence, relevance, or impact of white people and minimises or misrepresents that of non-white people

noun

1. **Whitewash** : a liquid composition for whitening a surface: such as a preparation for whitening the skin



Whitewashing, 2024.

The new work *Whitewashing*, 2024 an assemblage of found vintage objects presented in this exhibition Working Memories at fortyfivedownstairs, forms part of an ongoing artistic project *Incarceration Nation* (2006–). This project interrogates the history of Australia as a former penal colony for Britain’s unwanted convicts and as a place of continued incarceration for First Nations’ Peoples.

The concept of a noble, snow-white, pure, spotless and prosperous nation was implemented by Australia’s first Prime Minister Edmund Barton at the birth of the Federated States of Australia in 1901, with the introduction of the ‘White-Australia Policy’. This policy emerged through imperialist violence during the colonial period with settler land grabs and forced assimilationist missions associated with ‘cleansing’ the land of the ‘uncivilised’ and ‘unclean’ Indigenous population.

Purification rituals of cleansing were violently enforced and sought to legitimise Britain and post-Federation Australia’s cultural and economic values associated with racial superiority. The civilising mission is demonstrated in Australia through the many advertisements during the Federation period, that juxtaposed the binaries of dirt – cleanliness with blackness – whiteness in soap, paint, tobacco and alcohol advertisements. Australian traders and manufacturers such as J. Kitchen & Sons, the proprietors of Velvet Soap and several other well-known products, cultivated and promoted, through racist advertising imagery, harmful and negative stereotypes of Indigenous peoples that continue to reverberate down through the decades. These damaging and prolific representations were commonplace and often not seen as being inherently racist. Because they were commonplace in almost every home throughout Australia, these representations had lasting consequences. Indigenous children, especially those who were fair, and who were not well dressed, well-spoken in English, or spotlessly clean, could be forcibly taken away from their families and placed in institutions to assimilate them into the dominant culture.

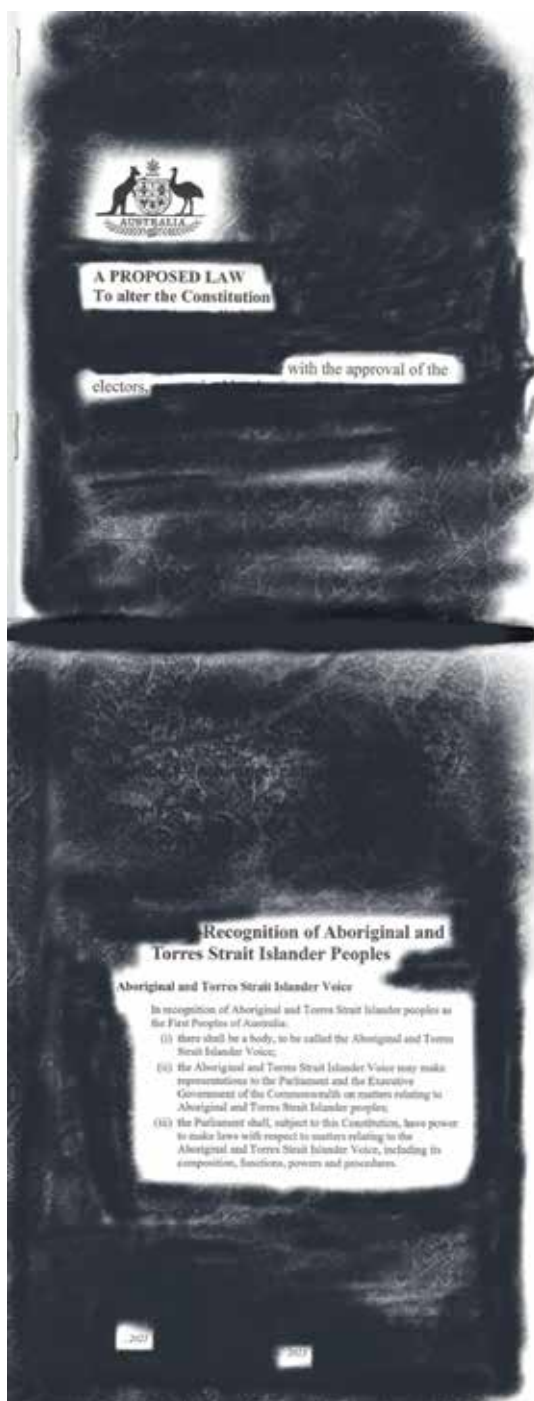
The public sphere was peppered with advertising material that presumed that all people must want to be white, and that blackness could be washed away. The collective amnesia and loss of memory about Australia’s racist foundations continues to affect the lives of First Peoples’ today, with government policies and interventions that still take children from their families. The whitewashing continues.

Artist Biography

Janelle Evans (Dharug) is a multi-disciplinary visual artist, curator and writer, currently living and working in Naarm (Melbourne). Janelle's work is informed by her cultural and ancestral connections to Country, in which she seeks to question and disrupt the narrative of British and European first contact encounters, and to create a counter-discourse to resultant mythologies that have formed in the national consciousness. Janelle has exhibited in solo and group shows in galleries and biennales in Australia, Japan and France and her works are held in public and private collections. Her short films have screened in festivals and theatres in Australia and France. Janelle has had artist residencies at Bundanon, Tokyo Geidai, and at Teerk-Roo-Ra, in Queensland's Moreton Bay. She has worked collaboratively with First Nations and other artists on several public and institutional art commissions for The State Library of Queensland, The Australian War Memorial, 4A Contemporary Asian Arts and Campbelltown Art Centre for the Sydney Festival. Janelle holds a PhD in Fine Art from Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney. She is the recipient of a number of awards and grants including The Macquarie Bank Scholarship, Australian Film Television and Radio School, The Dr Charles Perkins, AO Memorial Prize, University of Sydney, The Graduate Medal (Finalist), University of Sydney and The H S Carslaw Memorial Scholarship, Emmanuel College, The University of Cambridge. Janelle is currently Head, Master of Contemporary Art at Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne.

Helvi Apted

Writ for a Referendum, 2024
Voice Referendum Result, 2024



‘with the approval of the electors’

In the 2023 referendum, the electors (voters) rejected the proposal to enshrine an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament in the Australian Constitution. And as a nation that outcome is now in our working memory.

Many factors contributed to this outcome: conservative voting patterns, active negative campaigning from opposition parties, and the reality that most Australians don't understand how government or parliament actually functions. But the most important factor was that we have not properly reckoned with our history, or addressed the racism that persists in our country.

The sculpture *Voice Referendum Result* addresses the institutional memory of the nation state. The Australian Parliament House is constructed of sewn saddle felt and set upon a white plinth. This artwork references the colonial history of land use, the structures of the nation state, the proportion of Yes versus No votes, and the continued quietening of First Nations voices.

Artist Biography

Helvi Apted's practice spans sculpture, expanded drawing, and minimal video performance. She uses soft materials to make artworks that blend the past and present. Her work delves into themes of grief, change, and embodied sensing. Through her work she explores social issues, human experience and invites the viewer into a space for reflection. By using scale and materials, her work invites an awareness of one's bodyness. Helvi's practice plays with the formal language of sculpture and art. She uses the flexibility of textiles to adapt the way that galleries traditionally exhibit and install artworks. Helvi Apted (Finnish/Australian) was born in Djilang (Geelong). She has been a finalist in the Darebin Art Prize, a recipient of the R.L. Foote Design Studio Award and the Masters Mentoring VCA Art Award. Helvi has exhibited at Blindside, George Paton Gallery, VCA Art Space, Trocadero Art Space, Unassigned Gallery, Glimpse Art Space, and the 2023 VCA Art Grad Show. Helvi is exhibiting at Linden New Art Project Space in October 2024. She is completing a Master of Contemporary Art at the VCA.

Helvi worked as a ‘minor bureaucrat’ in social policy in the Victorian Public Service for many years, including areas that relate to Aboriginal people. Helvi is a current employee of the Victorian State Government IT agency.



Voice Referendum Result, 2024. Photo by Tobias Titz.



Voice Referendum Result, 2024. Photo by Tobias Titz.

Britt Salt

Uniform Thread, 2024

Uniform Thread maps the intertwined history of textiles and conflict embedded in the building at 45 Flinders Lane. From 1911, the clothing factory J R Blencowe operated in this building and manufactured uniforms for Australia's military forces during World War One. In *Uniform Thread*, a series of black cotton threads extend from the ceiling's architecture to the gallery wall, tracing the silhouette of a 1915 greatcoat as if it were on a cutting table ready to be assembled. The way these threads weave the shape of the garment together with the architecture recalls the process of sewing and the work that once occupied this space. As a precarious geopolitical environment unfolds around the world, the atrocity of violent conflicts are felt at home. This installation quietly reminds us of the unseen work of civilians during times of war.



Uniform Thread, 2024, installation view. Photo by Astrid Mulder.

Artist Biography

Britt Salt works across tapestry, drawing, sculpture, installation and public art. Her works are complex in their construction and minimal in aesthetic, exploring site-specific and imagined architectures. Using intuitive geometry and hand-crafted methodical processes, Salt traces the intricacies of order in public and private space, internal and external worlds and increasingly uncertain environments. Salt has exhibited at CRAFT, Melbourne; Linden New Arts; Town Hall Gallery, Hawthorn; Hazelhurst Regional Art Gallery; and PICA, Perth. She has received prestigious awards such as the Art & Australia Emerging Artist Award, Freedman Foundation Travelling Scholarship, and Kate Derum Award. Salt has undertaken residencies at the Australian Tapestry Workshop; Youkobo, Japan; Arteles, Finland; Heima, Iceland; and Red Gate Gallery, Beijing. She has created major public artworks for Melbourne International Airport, Tsinghua University Beijing, and Fender Katsalidis Architects. Salt holds a Masters of Contemporary Art (First Class) from Victorian College of the Arts (2023) and Bachelor of Fine Art (Honours- First Class) from Curtin University of Technology. Collections include Wangaratta Art Gallery; University of Melbourne; Justin Art House Museum; and Artbank. She was recently awarded the Fiona Myer White Story Residency 2024.



Uniform Thread, 2024, installation view. Photo by Astrid Mulder.

Shannon Slee

Lanky Queen Anne's Lace, 2024



Lanky Queen Anne's Lace, 2024. Photo by Tobias Tiz.

Lanky Queen Anne's Lace relies on the discarded cloth of a silk double-sided wraparound skirt once worn by the artist. For this work, Shannon unpicked the skirt, cut triangles from the cloth and re-joined them with hand dyed linen scraps. In this way, Shannon seeks to recognise the embedded histories within different pieces of fabric, including those worn close to the skin and those that face the external world. The new textile site is a dedication to Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus Carota*),

(*Daucus Carota*), a plant historically valued for its role in sustaining women's reproductive health. The repetition of shapes and the broken forms seek to imitate the fragile umbrella-shaped flower head of the plant. This work is part of a broader project for Shannon which imagines a sustained connection between textile work, abstracted geometries and plants that hold historical and almost forgotten reproductive knowledge.

Artist Biography

Shannon Slee is a contemporary artist living and working on Wurrundjeri Woi Wurrung land in Melbourne's north. Informed by feminist theories, Shannon presents clothing as a marker that is embedded with the body's experience. She unpicks and re-joins these with her own fabric remnants to create new textile sites. With a focus on the tactile and the domestic, her practice deliberates on a re-working of history that selects affect, emotion and feeling. Shannon recently completed a Master of Contemporary Art (First Class) at the Victoria College of the Arts at the University of Melbourne. She has exhibited at The Australian Tapestry Workshop, VCA grad-show, VCA Artspace, Linden New Art Project Space and George Paton Gallery. She is exhibiting at Linden New Art Project Space in October 2024. Her work is held in a public collection at the University of Melbourne.



Lanky Queen Anne's Lace, 2024. Photo by Tobias Tiz

Carolyn Menzies

Transient retreat, 2024

Dis/order, 2024

Fabrications, 2024



Dis/order, 2024. Photo by Kit Edwards.

Carolyn Menzies is captivated by the processes of transformation, encompassing materials, systems, and ideas. Her current body of work delves into the systems that sustain and reinforce the concept of boundaries. She explores the separation between humanity and nature, as codified in 19th-century Romanticism, and examines the divisions among humans, shaped by nationalism, colonialism, and individualism.

In an era marked by loneliness and dislocation, Menzies translates a deep yearning to reconnect with the natural world into sculptural form. She manipulates plaid blankets to create overlapping and makeshift demarcations on suspended formations, overlaying them with fragments of needlework. Drawing upon remnants from her personal history, the artist seeks to unravel the complex concepts and ideas these objects

She believes that looking backward is a path to finding a way forward and that embracing disorder, unravelling, and rewilding might allow us to situate ourselves more fully within the landscape.

Artist Biography

Carolyn Menzies earned a BFA at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand and an MA in Fine Arts from Central St Martin's College of Art and Design, London. The artist has participated in exhibitions at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhe tū; Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North; Suter Art Gallery, Nelson; Jonathan Smart Gallery, Christchurch, Century Gallery (ACAVA), London; Gallery 1 (Unitec), Auckland; Tinning Street Presents, Melbourne; Craft Victoria, Melbourne; The Australian Tapestry Workshop, Melbourne; Linden New Arts, Melbourne; Pinnacles Gallery, Townsville; among others. Curatorial projects include: 'The Albert Park Art Walk', a local government funded pop-up exhibition and accompanying events; 'The Off Season', at the Assembly Point Vitrines, Melbourne; 'Leftover Love: New Directions', for Pinnacles Gallery, Townsville. She has been artist-in-residence at the Australian Tapestry Workshop and Linden New Art.



Fabrications, 2024. Photo by Kit Edwards.



Fabrications, 2024. Photo by Kit Edwards.

Rebecca George

Material Memory, 2024



Material Memory, 2024. Photo by Simon Strong.

Textile threads hold memory. Vessels hold memory. The language of textiles and ceramics share the language of memory as we weave stories and we cast our minds back. These vessels are made with donated, discarded or recycled threads, frozen into porcelain. Flexible, reversible and biodegradable becomes rigid, permanent and fragile, retaining the material memory of the threads. Behind closed doors in the kiln, the threads provide temporary support before they burn away. The porcelain decides how much it will slump or crack. Experimenting with stitch, thread and drape, the process inputs can be controlled. The output cannot. The vessels cling to the I-beam spine of the building, sitting within the architecture of 45 Flinders Lane, which carries a history of Melbourne's textile industry. The mathematical pattern of the shelf spacing appears organic. Shadows create their own pattern.

Artist Biography

Rebecca George is a Naarm (Melbourne based) artist exploring patterns and shapes and connections between science, nature and art. She has an engineering and manufacturing background and brings a love of process to her art practice. Repetition, shadows, mathematical shapes and perspective feature in her work. The use of found, recycled or recyclable materials is important. She thinks through making. Rebecca started her art practice making hyperbolic crochet sculptures and is expanding it by introducing printmaking, collage, ceramics, woodwork, bronze casting and welding, finding new applications for common materials. Rebecca won the Heide at Home Maquette Challenge in 2021. She was commissioned by Knox to be part of their Immerse Program in 2021 with an installation at Stamford Park Homestead. She has exhibited in Melbourne Design Fringe in 2021, 2023 and 2024 and was highly commended for Object Design in 2024. Rebecca has also exhibited with Naarm Textiles Collective at fortyfivedownstairs and Assembly Point in 2022, 2023 and 2024. Her work was included in the Australian Textile Art Award 2022. As a Grampian Arts tutor in 2023, she exhibited at Ararat Gallery TAMA. In 2024 she exhibited at Five Walls and VCA Artspace. Rebecca is completing a Master of Contemporary Art at the VCA in 2024.



Material Memory, 2024.

Tamara Russell

Threads of Life (series), 2023/24

Knotted Green and Knotted Gold, 2024

Generations Linked, 2024



Knotted Green, 2024.

Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. All things are bound together. All things connect. – Chief Seattle.

There is a living web that runs through us linking us together through life. We cannot see how far the threads reach or in what direction they go. We take one thread at a time connecting the continuing strand with stitches to create the web that is our life. Our individual webs interconnect binding us all together.

Threads of Life aims to highlight and explore the emotive properties of textiles to generate, communicate and preserve memories along with creating discourse for the future. The works centre on the value of textiles in our lives and on the role of textiles in the process of preserving culture, telling stories, recollecting past events, recording experiences, as well as stimulating discussion.

‘As you travel through life, leave behind you the footsteps of kindness.’

Generations Linked

The family is the link to our past
Building treasured memories to last
All through our life long
As the generations continue on
Our family history is a part
Of who we are deep in our heart
Our roots are firmly set in the ground
As we branch out in life all around
Each family member is a link in a chain
That through our life will remain
Guided by the way we lived each day
Their roots are strong, their links a ray

Knotted

Life throws entanglements,
Knots of feelings,
Tangled thoughts of worry and hope
happiness and despair,

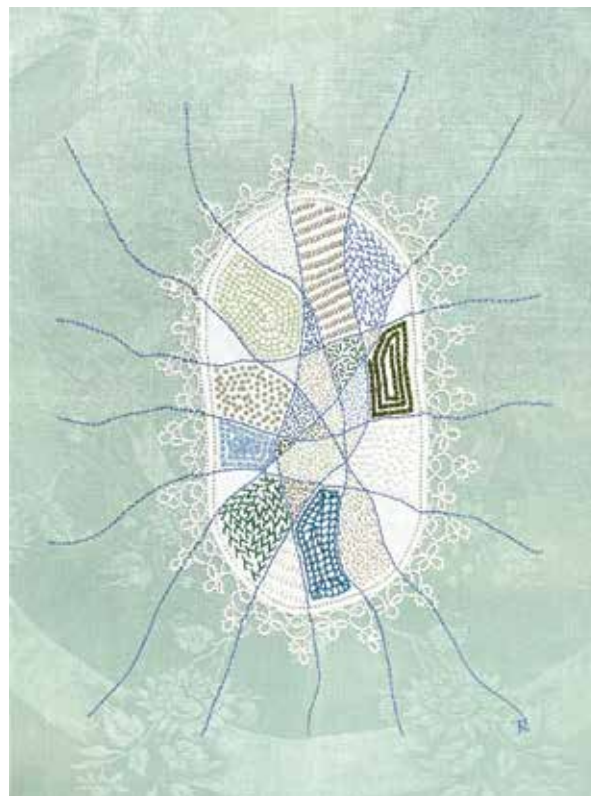
The knots of life can be overwhelming,
as though they will never unravel,
But we must learn to untangle knots takes time
The time to unravel them one by one.

In creating my textile kintsugi pieces I use the principles of kintsugi, a Japanese repair method, as a process to recreate discarded ceramics. Using reclaimed textiles, many hand-dyed, to wrap broken pieces and reassemble them with stitch, enhancing the breaks. As with kintsugi I aim to celebrate the imperfections, recreating the ceramic to become more interesting for its irregularities giving the object a new lease of life that becomes more refined thanks to its ‘scars’.

Artist Biography

Tamara Russell is a textile artist specialising in free machine embroidery, hand stitching and mending. In her textile practice, she explores her surroundings and interprets what she sees through embroidery. Her work has been exhibited in the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Canada and Australia. Tamara’s practice engages with the natural environment recreating images and shapes in her embroidered works in 2 and 3D form. In her work she is able to portray social issues including environment, climate change and the treatment of

asylum seekers. Textiles are the perfect medium for expressing thoughts using hand and machine stitching. Tamara works with found materials and finds joy in the unexpected uses that can be found for them. She loves this unpredictability and enjoys the inventiveness necessary to transform them. She uses materials that are reclaimed, things with a history that have been discarded and might otherwise end up in landfill. Tamara was invited to Curtain Springs for a residency in 2019, a finalist in the John Villiers Art Prize 2021 and the Australian Textile Art Award 2022 along with exhibiting in group and solo exhibitions. Her recent projects include facilitating the Moreland Quilt in 2017 - a community arts project, exhibiting in Melbourne galleries and teaching workshops in hand embroidery, free machine embroidery, mending skills and garment reinvention. She also accepts commissions to mend other people's favourites. Tamara is founder of the Naarm Textile Collective, curating their bi-annual exhibitions, a member of the Embroiderers Guild Victoria, Society for Embroidery Work (S.E.W.), Craft Victoria and Melbourne & Victorian Arts Inc (MAVA). Her work has been featured in Textile Fibre Forum, Fibre Arts, The Age and Machine Embroidery & Textile Art magazine.



Threads of Life - Winter, 2024.



Knotted Gold, 2024.

Phong Chi Lai

The Ancient Mother, 2022

The Ancient Father, 2022

You're Somebody's Baby, 2022

Man Does Not Stand Forever His Nullification...so take a seat, 2024



The Ancient Mother, 2022.

'We are not of today or of yesterday. We are of an immense age.'

- Carl Jung, 1959

Materials and forms can reveal deep connections between diverse cultures and crafts, as well as the relationship between humanity and nature. Do we begin our existence at the moment of birth, or do we carry with us collective, inherited memories from a time before? This is a question Phong Lai has explored through his work, inspired by witnessing the birth of babies within his close circle of friends. It's a question that has been pondered across all cultures.

In Lai's work, upcycled textiles are central, symbolising the exploration of these inherited memories. Each patch of fabric carries its own story—memories of the resources and hands that created the original material, the lives and moments of those who once inhabited it, and Lai's own contributions in sourcing, dyeing, and ultimately, reimagining the fabric into something



Man Does Not Stand Forever His Nullification...so take a seat, 2024.

Artist Biography

Phong Chi Lai (Studio PCL) is a Naarm (Melbourne) based designer/maker specialising in contemporary quilts and soft sculptures through improv patchwork. Previously a shoe designer/maker, Phong took the opportunity to work in textile-based social enterprises in Asia, reinforcing his artisan ethos. Taking inspiration from these experiences, he developed his textile practice upon returning to Australia in 2018. Using upcycled/deadstock fabrics and natural dyes, Phong takes a considered and intuitive approach, responding to materials and his surroundings. He applies traditional techniques; hand-quilting, assemblage and patchwork with an overtly free hand approach to build compositional complexity. Phong has exhibited at The Wangaratta Art Gallery, QuiltCon (USA), School House Studios Gallery, Linden New Art Gallery and The Australian Tapestry Workshop. His work 'Creating Character' won Best Object Design at Design Fringe 2023, he was a 2024 Artist in Residence at The Australian Tapestry Workshop and a finalist in The Irene Davis International Tapestry Prize. Phong has collaborated with The Social Studio, The Melbourne Modern Quilt Guild, The Australian Tapestry Workshop/Melbourne Fashion Festival and Melbourne Design Week to facilitate improv hand quilting/stitching and natural dyeing workshops.



You're Somebody's Baby, 2022.

List of Works

Clockwise Left to Right

Elise Cakebread

Eureka II, 2024

Found materials; cotton, polyester, silk, linen, lurex, acrylic, wool, rayon, lycra, viscose and cotton thread

30 x 130cm (height variable)

Elise Cakebread

Eureka, 2024

Found materials; cotton, polyester, silk, linen, lurex, acrylic, wool, rayon, lycra, viscose and cotton thread

400 x 260cm

Janelle Evans

Whitewashing, 2024

Assemblage of found vintage objects
Linen tea towels, pine soap box, soap, cardboard package, cotton towel, plastic hooks, acrylic fabric paint, cotton thread, rephotographed digital print

Dimensions variable

Helvi Apted

Writ for a Referendum, 2024

Digital drawing

Dimensions variable

Helvi Apted

Voice Referendum Result, 2024

Saddle felt (wool, viscose), cotton thread, wire, plinth, white paint, pencil

130 x 65 x 65cm

Britt Salt

Uniform Thread, 2024

Cotton, screws, photographic print

Dimensions variable

Shannon Slee

Lanky Queen Anne's Lace, 2024

Artist's own discarded silk skirt, hand-dyed linen, linen remnants, thread, on silk-linen backing

132 x 132cm

Carolyn Menzies

Transient Retreat, 2024

Felt, needlework, woollen blanket

44 x 81cm

Carolyn Menzies

Dis/order, 2024

Felt, needlework, woollen blanket

43.5 x 81cm

Carolyn Menzies

Fabrications, 2024

Needlework, woollen blankets, window cord, wire mesh

384 x 60 x 30cm

Rebecca George

Material Memory, 2024

Porcelain

Dimensions variable

Tamara Russell

Threads of Life, 2023/24 (series)

Hand stitching on vintage damask linen napkin

dimensions variable

Tamara Russell

Generations Linked, 2024

Reclaimed ceramics, reclaimed dyed silk, hand-stitched cotton thread and Viking woven copper wire

40 x 35cm

List of Works

Tamara Russell

Knotted - Green and Knotted - Gold, 2024

Reclaimed ceramics, reclaimed dyed silk,
hand-stitched cotton thread and Viking
woven copper wire

17 x 13cm and 22 x 14cm

Phong Chi Lai

Ancient Father, 2022

Quilt top - 100% reclaimed natural fibres, hand
dyed, plant dyes. Quilt backing/ batting/
binding - 100% re-claimed natural fibres,
commercial cotton batting. Plant dyes - Punica
granatum, Eucalyptus mix, Acacia catchu,
tannin mix, Phormium tenax and Persea
americana. Machine pieced, hand quilted, hand
embroidered and appliquéd.

130 x 170cm

Phong Chi Lai

Ancient Mother, 2022

Quilt top - 100% reclaimed natural fibres, hand
dyed, plant dyes. Quilt backing/ batting/
binding - 100% re-claimed natural fibres,
commercial cotton batting. Plant dyes - Punica
granatum, Eucalyptus mix, Acacia catchu,
tannin mix, Phormium tenax and Persea
americana. Machine pieced, hand quilted, hand
embroidered and appliquéd.

130 x 170cm

Phong Chi Lai

*Man Does Not Stand Forever His Nulification...so
take a seat, 2022*

Reclaimed chair (internal structure),

Quilt - 100% reclaimed natural fibres

Stuffing - up-cycled polyester and recycled PET
filler

Machine pieced, hand quilted, embroidered
and appliquéd

100 x 100 x 100cm

Helvi Apted
Elise Cakebread
Janelle Evans
Rebecca George
Phong Chi Lai
Carolyn Menzies
Tamara Russell
Britt Salt
Shannon Slee

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