HAVE POETS LEFT
A PATCH TO SEW?
Published July 2017
Prepared on Wiradjuri land in Wagga Wagga, Australia
by the HR Gallop Gallery, Charles Sturt University

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Cover:
Details from Susan Wood, within/significant textiles (2017)
HAVE POETS LEFT A PATCH TO SEW?

RIVERINA RESPONSES TO TEXTILES

11 April – 5 May 2017
HR Gallop Gallery
PARTICIPANTS

This exhibition was created on Wiradjuri land, and we thank Aunty Gail Manderson for her support.

I also wish to thank all the artists, poets, participants and patrons who made this exhibition possible, notably the Wagga Wagga City Council Annual Grants program, Eastern Riverina Arts and the Booranga Writers’ Centre.

Rachel Walls
Damian Candusso
Susan Wood
Scott Howie
Kerri-Anne Chin
Barbel Ullrich
Elizabeth ‘Bess’ Cook
Dominique Sweeney
Robert Lewis
Aunty Gail Manderson
Melanie Evans
Atlanta Hall
Jacquie Tinkler
Andrea Schineanu
Claire Baker
David Gilbey
Lachlan Brown
Ingrid Bruckner
Cassily Charles
Stuart Boag

Ian Stewart
Joan Cahill
Kathryn Halliwell
Maurice Corlett
Ahmed Naguib
Timothy Crutchett
Patrick McKenzie
Geoff Gordon
Christopher Orchard
Andrew Hagan
Julie Montgarrett
Neill Overton
Tracie Miller
Kristen Groves
Tim Kurylowicz
Luke Grealy
D.E. South

Special thanks to the Wagga Wagga Embroiderer’s Guild, the Girl Guides of NSW and the Museum of the Riverina.
This exhibition responds to a challenge from an Arabian poet. This was written over 1300 years ago, and almost 13,000km away from the HR Gallop Gallery in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales. This challenge was the question “Have [the] poets left a patch to sew?”

This was one of many rhetorical questions raised by the *Mualla’qat* or ‘Seven Suspended Odes’. It has been interpreted in various ways, such as “are there songs yet unsung?”, “are there any places left to patch?”, and “did they have no tune to sing of?”. Within these variations, one theme was consistent – the poet was asking if anything had been left unsaid.¹

These were a series of *qasidas* (odes) written in Arabic in the seventh century, likely stemming from earlier oral traditions. These pre-Islamic poems received their nickname through the myth that they were written on textiles suspended from the Ka’ba in Mecca, rather like the black drapes of the *kiswa* which now features gold-woven calligraphy from the Qur’an. They were written by seven authors – described by Gabriel Levin as Imru al-Qays (“the Vagabond Prince”), Tarafa (“the One the Gods Loved”), Zuhair (“the Moralist”), Labid (“the Man with the Crooked Staff”), Antara (“the Black Knight”), Amr Ibn Kulthum (“the Regicide”), and Harith (“the Leper”).²

The collation of seven authors for seven poems, each written on textiles, prompted the theme for this exhibition. Having worked in Wagga Wagga since 2012, I was curious to see what would happen if this question was raised for the artists, poets and textiles of the Riverina region. The call was issued: How might you respond to a significant textile?

Textiles provide vast contributions to visual, cultural and material heritage. Overwhelmingly anonymous, formative for feminist perspectives within art history, central to the tenuous division between art and craft, spectacular and utilitarian in equal measure, these flexible machines have been essential to humanity for thousands of years.³ The textiles selected for this exhibition are significant, in the sense that they are meaningful to someone other than their owner or maker. They sometimes draw on historic fabrics - real, remembered, and imagined - as well as items of daily clothing, ceremonial garments, culturally significant fragments and processes of making, including weaving, dying, sewing, embroidery and applique. Yet this exhibition was not specifically about the textiles themselves as a collection of interesting objects. Every piece focussed upon our responses to those textiles. These were ‘the patches to be sewn.’

As Horace wrote in his *Ars Poetica* in 19 BCE, *Ut pictura poesis* – “as is painting, so is poetry”. This contested phrase asks for the interrogation of aesthetic and other concepts from visual culture across multiple media and disciplines. One might argue that until relatively recently, textiles have been overlooked within the canons of art history. Horace’s maxim linked the arts through the practice of ekphrasis, the description or interpretation of real and imaginary works of art. In this spirit, this exhibition considered the implications of significant textiles - especially the elements that determined their ‘significance’ for the artist or poet who proposed them for inclusion.
Riverina artists and poets were invited to respond to the artworks or their own significant textiles. The Booranga Writers’ Centre generously supported this process by hosting a workshop in the exhibition itself, and several of the poems written are featured in this catalogue, just as they were featured on the walls of the HR Gallop Gallery. The artists were selected from many proposals, assisted by Eastern Riverina Arts, and were paid a loan fee for the use of their artwork. This was possible due to the generosity of the Wagga Wagga City Council’s Annual Grant program.

By collecting responses to significant textiles, the exhibition *Have Poets Left a Patch to Sew?* shared the rich stories, innovation, history and global interconnections of the Riverina. These stories are tactile and macabre, ambitious and experimental, provocative and heartwarming. The works are powerful, understated, and designed to linger in your memory. For this exhibition, ‘significant’ textiles were defined as those which possess meaning for someone other than the owner or maker of that textile. They are objects that prompt stories.

The stories can be hidden in plain sight. As one enters the Wagga Wagga City Council, the first framed artwork is the time-worn, frayed, and smoke-tarnished flag of the HMAS Wagga. It evokes a harboured vessel, land-locked and dry docked for the foreseeable future; and the last of its kind (the Bathurst class corvettes). It served Australian interests from 1942, initially by patrolling the waters around Papua New Guinea, and later conducting oceanographic surveys and training personnel. This particular white ensign was last flown by the Australian Navy in October 1960, where it travelled from Sydney to French Noumea, before finally finding its way to its namesake inland city in April 2011. Flags like it were used from 1911 to 1967, representing both change and continuation through historic textiles. This was also, by far, the most portable piece of the HMAS Wagga.

Other textiles situate Wagga as a place of significant textiles. Waggas were a type of vernacular quilt, sewn by hand from recycled fabrics and used as utilitarian blankets in the early 20th century. Sleep-outs on verandas were made bearable by layers of waggas on winter nights, used by traveling workers and families alike. Their name is linked to the city of Wagga Wagga, representing an important relationship between the Riverina region and Australian textile heritage. The gigapan (or gigapixel) photography represented in this exhibition by Timothy Cruthett’s work with the Thatcher Panel has also been applied to the Waggas of the National Quilt Register, hosted by the Pioneer Women’s Museum in Tumbarumba, New South Wales. These exceptionally high-resolution images created new means of accessing and displaying these textiles, asking us to consider the decisions made by their makers as they were made.

The HR Gallop Gallery was configured into four rooms for this exhibition, darkened with spotlights for individual objects. Each held a distinct theme, but like the returning loop of an embroiderer’s thread, each room contained a link to the next room. The first room was linked by the theme of Egyptian khayamiya and digital artwork, including the pervasive subtlety of Damian Candusso’s soundscape *The Appliqued Streets of Cairo*, as Rachel Walls’ animation *Pomegranate* rotated, stretched, and metamorphed across the wall. These were responses to a substantial collection of khayamiya located in Wagga Wagga for ongoing research at Charles Sturt University, and suggest directions for a future exhibition of ‘digital khayamiya’.
The second room centred upon a collection of artists’ books. Susan Wood’s *with/in/significant textiles* were laid over a white-cloth plinth for visitors to handle, both neatly ordered and disarrayed during the exhibition. Kerri-Ann Chin’s Peranakan-inspired graphic designs and artist’s book occupied a brightly coloured wall, as Barbel Ulrich’s *The Book of the Soil* descended from the ceiling like an ancient stalactite. Filling the wall in vitriolic opposition was Scott Howie’s bombastic *(and still we) Roll Up*, belligerently blowing an inaudible whistle, both urgently calling and repulsive, like the flag of the Lambing Flag riots. It was the ‘odd one out’ in a room of international encounters - including Egypt, Malaysia, China and Arabia - within the NSW Riverina.

The third room contained reflections on textiles and the body. Worn as protection, for warmth, to indicate status, identity and achievement, as well as connecting history with the future. Two of the three artworks here also featured flags - the Union Jack of the UK in the hands of *Her Future, My Present, Our Past* by Bess Cook, and the Indigenous Australian Flag worn under the possum-skin cloak by Gail Manderson. These works directly considered the ‘patches’ of the exhibition title, for the story of the Girl Guides can be read through its patches - both for individuals and the organisation as a global whole - and the accumulation of possum skins can be a life-long patchwork process. The eerie performance of *The Human Glove* took their ‘significant’ textile from an gruesome act of forensic science prompted by the wearing of a woollen jumper.

Through an act of overlooked or forgotten violence, we move into the final room. This was a long corridor containing the confronting installation of *Wagga’s Dirty Laundry*. As a memorial and call to arms, this initially innocuous collection of childrens’ clothes reveals its purpose as you become surrounded by their relentlessly real embroidered messages. A collaborative work of this emotional magnitude and harsh realism should not share space with anything else.

Collectively, this is just a sample of the Riverina’s responses to textiles through poetry, visual art and personal reflections. What might yet be left unsaid?

SAM BOWKER


This animation is an exploration of the contrast between appliqué and bricolage in creation of Egyptian khayamiya textiles. *Pomegranate* focuses on a central pattern within the neo-Khedival khayamiya by Ahmed Naguib, repeating within eight geometric sections.

Khayamiya textiles exhibit geometric patterns that seem to be inspired by nature, not unlike art deco or art nouveau. Some of the motifs present in khayamiya are associated with other parts of the world, such as the fleur de lys. The origins of such motifs are uncertain.

This animation attempts to construct a space of creative genesis: the moment of fabrication. It mimics the human desire to return to points of origin in culture and environments lost in migration or between generations. *Pomegranate* considers how textiles from the past may be romanticized as a future-form of ‘culture’.

This work also considers the contrast between weaving and sewing as creative activities: *Pomegranate* attempts to return khayamiya to a point of origin, artificially reuniting artifact with the forming and folding of fabric, the movement of the needle and thread, and the new potentials of digital spaces.

RACHEL WALLS
Rachel Walls
Stills from *Pomegranate* (2017)
5-minute animation (Digital Khayamiya)
APPLIQUED STREETS OF CAIRO

(Soundscape of infinite duration, 2017)

Sonic landscapes are a complex layering of tones, volumes and frequencies created by the originating sound source, and contoured by our surroundings. *Appliqued Streets of Cairo* is a sonic response to the physical texturing of materials used in the creation of the textiles called khayamiya (Egyptian tentmaker appliques).

The soundscape represents the various textures of sounds that emanate from within and beyond the places used to create these objects. Despite being a craft where the creator sits comparatively still whilst appliqueing cotton to canvas, the soundtrack also represents the movement not only by the needle, but the world that surrounds these artisans: The Street of the Tentmakers in old Cairo.

DAMIAN CANDUSSO
Looking north along the Street of the Tentmakers (2014)
Photograph by Jenny Bowker
NEO-KHEDIVAL KHAYAMIYA

The Egyptian Tentmakers have sewn khayamiya textiles by hand in Cairo for centuries, changing their intricate designs with each generation. The patterns of the Khedival period (1867 to 1914) had been forgotten by the artisans and neglected by Egyptian museums. These panels had vanished from the Street of the Tentmakers, and rarely appear in books or museums.

The master tentmaker Ahmed Naguib learned of the existence of Khedival khayamiya panels in the Agricultural Museum at Ad Doqi, near Cairo. From that century-old panel he created this interpretation in new fabrics. The pale orange field represents the coarse canvas base of the original applique.

This is part of an ongoing series in which long-forgotten khedival designs are re-discovered and re-interpreted in new colours, approximating the originals and re-invigorating the art form. These are not commissioned, but invented by Ahmed Naguib after seeing images reproduced through the screen of his mobile phone. In this case, he worked from the actual textile as an original reference.

Wagga Wagga is home to an exceptional private collection of Egyptian khayamiya textiles.
Ahmed Naguib


Hand-sewn cotton applique on canvas
THE THATCHER PANEL - GIGAPAN

First acquired by Ada L. Thatcher-Huntzinger (from Connecticut, USA) in Cairo in the early 1900s, the Thatcher Panel is a superlative example of Khedival khayamiya – the embellished tent walls made by the tentmakers of Cairo. It combines ambitious scale (470cm long) with unusually fine stitching, accurate calligraphy, considered geometry and a diverse composition. Look closely and you will see how the original pale and dark blue dyes have faded, but remain visible through tiny holes and folds.

The Egyptian Tentmakers created pavilions that were used to host weddings, funerals, graduations, and ceremonial events in public spaces. These tent panels are still raised in streets, becoming ceilings or walls as needed. They have been largely replaced by printed imitation fabrics, but this example is entirely hand-sewn. It was sewn by a small team of anonymous male tentmakers in a workshop near the Street of the Tentmakers in the old centre of Cairo, south of the towering gate of Bab Zweylah.

The Arabic calligraphy presents folkloric sayings. These can be translated as:

- Top: ‘The wellbeing of man is in guarding his tongue’
- Left: ‘Welcome and come in peace’
- Bottom: ‘And with thankfulness, bounty is perpetuated’
- Right: ‘Justice is the key to dominion’

Ruth Huntzinger-Szalay (of California) inherited this tent panel, which she passed on to her son Frank David Szalay, then his daughter Rachel Gerken. It sat in a cedar chest for over 40 years in Whitefish, Montana before being sold via eBay. It was loaned to Sam Bowker from Seif el Rashidi.

Timothy Crutchett of Charles Sturt University took this opportunity to create an ultra-high-resolution “gigapan” photograph of this extraordinary panel. This is part of his ongoing series of experimental photographs using this technology, which is also used by the Google Cultural Institute to document fragile or unique artworks with exceptional clarity.

You can see the results of his experiments here:  http://scci.csu.edu.au/gigapixelproject/
The CSU Gigapan system recording the Thatcher Panel
Friday 11 May 2017
WITH/IN/SIGNIFICANT TEXTILES

I am deeply interested in how choices are made about the value of objects. What is significant to one person is not necessarily significant to another. When it comes to textiles our responses are varied, ranging from reverence to indifference to revulsion.

This suite of artist’s books are made from, and in response to, textiles that were significant, in one way or another, to their original owner but which have since been discarded.

You are invited to handle and consider your own responses to these tactile objects.

SUSAN WOOD

AN INVITATION CORDIALLY EXTENDED

(a response to Sue Wood’s with/in/significant textiles 2017)

urged by the artist’s printed instruction
we pick up & handle these six folded books

she questions the meaning of ‘significant’ textiles
with her layering of fabrics,
old, discarded,
that once had a different life

as we stroke, examine, fold, & refold
images drift through minds:
of summer evenings
& young ladies dreaming
& working men in flannelette shirts

a man’s handkerchief monogrammed ‘P’
maybe a birthday or Christmas gift
becomes now a sky of pale blue
a stitch-edged hole cloud
revealing the layer underneath

stitches are visible, uneven,
in shapes that don’t seem to have meaning
threads left dangling, unfinished,
layered edges frayed
scissors not cutting cleanly
lines of old buttons & sewing notions
evoke a deceased aunt’s sewing box

we ponder & handle
& replace the artist books
two lines of three
onto the white-clothed plinth

CLAIRE BAKER
Susan Wood

*with/in/significant textiles* (2017)

Six artists’ books sewn from collected textiles
(AND STILL WE) ROLL UP

The Lambing Flat Roll Up banner is a delicate reminder of the racism entrenched in this nation. It resides encased in perspex and carefully preserved at the Lambing Flat Museum in Young, unsure of its relationship to contemporary Australia.

In 1861 a mob of over three thousand miners marched behind the banner and a brass band to Lambing Flat where they attacked the Chinese mining camps in a frenzy, assaulting them, cutting off their pigtails, destroying their equipment and setting their camp on fire.

This work is part of Scott Howie’s ongoing exploration of durational performance.

SCOTT HOWIE

FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE


LACHLAN BROWN
Scott Howie
(and still we) roll up (2017)
Digital video (2:48 minute loop)
MY PERANAKAN JOURNEY

*My Peranakan Journey* is a personal reflection on the interactions between the visual heritage of South-East Asian Peranakan (‘Straits Chinese’) culture and motifs more familiar to the Riverina.

My maternal grandfather, Mr Koh Hong Lim, was Singaporean Peranakan. However, to this day there are very limited details about his life. By researching Peranakan heritage sites of Katong in Singapore and Malacca in Malaysia, the extraordinary diversity and intricacy of Peranakan textiles caught my attention. They incorporated cultures from China, Malaysia, Singapore and many other parts of the world through batik, silk garments and bead work.

From researching and understanding intricate Peranakan motifs, I was able to create a series of contemporary motifs. These depict an interpretation of my Australian childhood during the 1990s, using design techniques such as repetition of shape, narrative, symmetry and contrast.

KERRI-ANNE CHIN
Kerri-Anne Chin


Digital prints and artists’ book
THE BOOK OF THE SOIL

The Book of the Soil consists of seven suspended pages. In this sense, it is linked to the Mu’allaqat in format, but not content. The Mu’allaqat is a group of seven Arabic poems from the pre-Islamic era. The name means ‘The Suspended Odes’ or ‘The Hanging Poems’, the legendary explanation being that these poems were once woven in gold thread on textiles suspended over the Ka’ba at Mecca. A line from these poems inspired this exhibition.

Drawing from Christian contexts, these pages are inspired by altar cloth. The covering of an altar with cloth became sanctioned in the 7th century – around the same time as the Mu’allaqat was written. Just as altar cloth is ritually ‘purified’, these seven canvases were buried for several months at a bush site near Mount Bogong, slowly imbibing their environment or ‘blessed’ by the Earth.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam regard clean white burial shrouds as the final textile worn by a person – just as soft, warm textiles are the first thing we wrap babies in.

The use of cloth and stitching, as well as binding and mending, plays a significant role in my land based art as it evokes the process of understanding and healing an environment. In many cultures a ‘thread of life’ symbolises human destiny, spun by goddesses of fate. The cosmos itself is also conceived as a textile, a vast ‘web’ in which everything is connected.

Three images of my shadow are embedded on these pages. These represent a self-portrait and a spiritual and physical connection with the land in which these textiles were formed.

You are invited to turn the pages.

BÄRBEL ULLRICH
Bärbel Ullrich

*The Book of the Soil (2016-2017)*

Artists’ book / mixed media installation
THE HUMAN GLOVE

On Christmas Day in 1933, a man’s corpse was found in the Murrumbidgee River near Wagga Wagga. It was unrecognisable. The wool shirt he wore shrank in the flowing water, causing the skin of one hand to become detached and float away. Luckily it became hooked on a nearby branch, where it was discovered by a police officer - Detective Constable Joe Ramus.

To record fingerprints from this grisly find, Detective Constable JS Walkom wore this ‘human glove’. This lead to the identification of the victim and arrest of the murderer. The actual ‘glove’ is now in the collection of the Museum of the Riverina.

This true story became the basis for an eerie live performance by Dominique Sweeney and Robert Lewis, held in the HR Gallop Gallery at 3pm on Friday 28 April 2017.
Dominique Sweeney and Robert Lewis
*The Human Glove* (2017)
Live Performance (20 minutes)
HER FUTURE, MY PRESENT, OUR PAST

Girl Guiding in New South Wales dates back to a meeting in 1920 between Lady Margaret Davidson (wife of the then-Governor of NSW) and Miss Nella Levy, an experienced Girl Guide from the UK. With the formation of the State Association, Miss Levy (‘The Lev’) needed to create the uniform from memory and an old copy of Policy Organisation and Rules.

No trace of this original uniform exists, bar a photocopy of a photo taken at Bondi in 1921. This revealed that the first Australian uniform was closely based on the British Girl Guides of 1916-1919.

In order to better understand the now-lost uniform, Bess Cook has drawn from many primary and secondary sources to create an accurate replica of ‘the best a Girl Guide could be’ in 1918. This replica draws on accurate period materials and hand embroidery/construction techniques to show a First Class Guide with All Round Cords, as well as a selection of the more unusual badges that were on offer in the earliest years of the Movement.

This is the archetype of a uniform that has become one of the most recognised around the world. Girl Guides from the Riverina (where Guiding has a long history) will see traces of award and proficiency badge systems which are both familiar and distinct from those with which they grew up.

THE CAMP BLANKET OF GUIDE LEADER ROBYN (KULLA) MILLER

“Growing up as a Girl Guide in the 1990s, I would sit enthralled, watching as this blanket and its wearer - a tiny but formidable figure - danced around the campfire, singing much beloved songs. I would pore over each patch, asking questions, hearing the many stories of Kulla’s Guiding back to 1954. On her passing on 20 February 2017, I was humbled that she entrusted the blanket to my keeping. It is part of the reason for my lifelong interest in the uniforms, badges and memorabilia that gives voice to the individual experiences from within our Organisation.”

ELIZABETH ‘BESS’ COOK
Bess Cook


Hand-made replica 1918 NSW Girl Guide Uniform
SILK STORY #4 - POSSUM SKIN CLOAK

“We are grateful for those Aboriginal women who have come before us, for those who sacrificed their lives, passed on their traditions, stories and language, so that we can create.”

This installation is a collaboration between Melanie Evans and Wiradjuri Elder/Master Weaver, Aunty Gail Manderson. These two women have worked and created alongside each other for eight years, working in the local community to pass on traditions, language and culture. These textiles are a testimony to the survival of cultural practices, often broken by the violent processes in the colonisation of our country, Australia.

Evans and Manderson are constantly learning and passionate about passing on knowledge. The slideshow and booklet show the revival of the old tradition of possum skin cloaks that were used before the invasion of Australia. Very few possum skin cloaks made prior to 1900 exist today, now preserved in museum collections. Many concluded their life-long service as a burial wrapping for their owner.

In 2015, Banmirra Arts (Victoria), led by Lee Duroch, Vicki Couzens and Amanda Reynolds were invited to Wagga Wagga to conduct a workshop within our local Aboriginal community to revive the tradition of making Possum Skin Cloaks. This process is also part of healing our community.

In the silk story, there are ancestral women and those who passed within the Earth. They were forbidden to speak their language, practice their culture, sing their stories and dance their ceremonies. The women above the ground represent the revival of language and cultural practices, such as the making of possum skin cloaks. Aboriginal people are now free to speak their language, sing their stories and dance their ceremonies. Unfortunately a lot of knowledge is broken and it will take a long time to remember, to bring this back - sometimes the answers are ‘blowing in the wind’, represented by the cockatoo feather. This is why sharing our knowledge with each other is so important - and more importantly, honouring and acknowledging those who came before us, with respect.

MELANIE EVANS & GAIL MANDERSON
Melanie Evans - *Silk Story #4 - Blowing in the Wind* (2015 - 2017)
Silkscreen and mixed media on bush dyed silk

Gail Manderson - *Possum Skin Cloak* (2015 - ongoing)
Possum skins (from New Zealand) and kangaroo sinew
MARKETPLACE WEAVERS

Few look upwards
to the sculptural representation
of our Indigenous gatherers
woven fish traps and baskets
both traditional and contemporary
suspended from an indoor sky.

Shoppers wander, scurry, dash
alone, pairs, groups,
on the bright shiny floor
of the Wagga Marketplace
city of many crows
on the land of the Wiradjuri people.

The shopping list of the eons
kangaroos, yams, yabbies and fish
gathered from their land
their market
the Australian bush
rivers and streams.

I stand midst the colour,
the light, the excitement
of today’s shoppers, with my face
to that representative heaven
ethereally juxtaposed upon our
twenty first century experience.

On a path weaving all together
reads the translated message.
All lives are intermingled
as we greet friends and strangers,
gaze into tantalizing display windows
share our gathered fresh cuisine.

_Murruway-dya_
_Waybarra_
_Mawang_

the ‘hands on weavers’
have given us
a lasting truth.

JOAN CAHILL
Hands On Weavers Inc.

Ngiyangarra (2016)
Woven reed installation
Children’s clothes represent growth and the passing of time, with beautifully hand-sewn embroidery that demonstrates dedication to craft and parenting. Yet the inspiration of this confronting artwork was the white shroud that covers a body at a crime scene. This artwork – an act of ‘craftivism’ – allowed us to do something constructive with the feelings raised by seeing that shroud.

We rarely hear the experiences of children that live with domestic violence. Each piece of hand-embroidered children’s clothing serves as a vehicle for their anonymous words, collected from police statements in the Riverina. Some of the clothing is expensive and well-made, because domestic violence can happen in any family. Others appear fine but a closer inspection shows there are deliberate mistakes such as embroidery stitches done backwards; if someone knows what to look for, they can discover the signs of domestic violence. Some bear plain and ugly embroidery as domestic violence in public, where everyone knows exactly what is happening.

These children’s clothes - in which they play, live, laugh, sleep - are an important vehicle to raise awareness of the realities of domestic violence. We want you to not to feel sad, but angry enough to do something about it.

These are real clothes and real stories.

ANDREIA SCHINEANU, JACQUIE TINKLER, ATLANTA HALL
Andreia Schineanu, Jacquie Tinkler, and Atlanta Hall

Wagga’s Dirty Laundry (2016)

Hand-embroidered children’s clothes and quilts
MEDITATION ON A STITCH

two strands of four
set to twirl & dance
thread ballerinas of ice blue
they’re stilled & passed
through a crewel needle’s eye

[veins stand proud on an idle aged hand]

next an end is rolled
between thumb and index finger
threads interlock
to form an anchoring knot

bead-headed pins pierce Dupion silk
affixing it to a calico backing
silk worms’ hard labour at rest
on unbleached cotton

[a rectangle of sky quivers in the heat
over hay drying in summer fields]

from back to front
the needle forces its way
between minute fibre-grids
which gasp at this trespass
warp & weft
become the mesh
on which to drape
stitched tendrils

[espaliered fruit trees hug brick walls
bees hum in the sun]

a repetitive pattern formed without thinking
 - short long short long –
a child’s pre-writing exercise

[a cursive flow between ruled lines
ink-wave crests on a paper sea]

layered fabric exhales its resistance
to the needle-thread intrusion

[a life’s surrendering breath]

CLAIRE BAKER
INTERWOVEN: TWELVE PATCHES

strung through

dirty laundry
embroidered porn

whispers
hurt ...

lasered needlepoint
fine line kaleidoscope

blossom
pomegranate burst ...

unsettling sonic punctuation
appliqués old Cairo traffic
to Yindyamarra
dreaming ...

khayamiya never looked so good
blazons Khedival
from the master
to the Murrumbidgee ...

these livres composés
have me in stitches:
imagine suits, petticoats
bra hooks
suspender clip ...

Squeeze the Blackhead of Racism!
Watch its Yellow Pus
Spatter!!!
Peranakan’s budgerigar
  tweets batik, silk, beads
    through Southern Asia’s
      pinks, blues, yellows ...

a week of gravecloths
  stained by earth’s afterbirth
    resurrects shadows ...

the detached skin of a
  hand
    floated away

  policeman’s glove
    fingered the murderer ...

Girl Guide love triangles
  rectangles
    archangels of accomplishment
      and salvation ...

skinned possums
  stuck together
    from New Zealand’s South Island
      cloaking the Wiradjuri ...

we’re woven into the cosmos
  by ancestral women
    speaking their spirits
      from Gobbagombalin, Pomingalarna, Eunonyhareenya
        up to the sky ...

DAVID GILBEY
A DIARY OF TWO BUTTERFLIES IN THE PLEASURE QUARTERS

Tojiro-san shows how they walk
the woman and the spineless, charming man
different centres of gravity, feet sliding
differently over studio vinyl
different degrees of erect.

His voice breathes his particular kabuki
as if from behind rice paper screens:
wagota – realistic, elegant. He’s moved us
from the world of gods and heroes
to knockabout.

His specialty is the paper kimono, kamiko,
to some a sign of being disowned by his family
but here, inherited from his master,
a stiff skin to move in
and when he cries he must be careful
not to flood its pastel skies, fanciful rivers.

Film clips show his work: Love Letters on the Road –
burlesque, but strangely poignant,
his smooth, delicate body allows this small man
to mince the woman’s loss, before,
chest out, voice subtly deepened, he struts the man again.

He smiles at the presenter – she is all audience,
on this Sunday morning educational TV
the English dubbing brings him close
yet dramatizes his distance.

Comic tragedy –
vivid, subtle, male, female
art’s oxymorons.

DAVID GILBEY
Threads
material scraps
satin bowerbird cache
butterfly wings, fence posts
patchwork.

(© D.E. South)
SERGE DE NÎMES

You can trust the French. Always coming up with something which everyone eventually wants – great red wine, fine Aveyron Roquefort cheese – and denim. Denim? You can see how it has come about – Serge de Nîmes. And where is Nîmes? In the south of France, of course.

But, what about jeans? Aren’t they singularly American – as American as Levi Strauss, the company that popularised jeans from the 1890s, first as workwear, then as fashion items? Mais, non! The first denim trousers were made in Genoa, Italy. The French word for Genoa? Gênes!

A clever member of my family, a former Wagga Wagga resident who is passionately concerned about the environment and a crusader for re-usage and the minimising of flagrant consumption, has collected remnants of blue – that is, indigo dyed – denim from friends, relatives, op shops – anywhere she thought the owner might be about to throw out the item. From this humble and well-used assemblage she has created a bed-sized quilt which has been given to another member of our extended family as a start-up heirloom, as most hand-made quilts become.

As I look at this quilt I find myself at the beginning of a long corridor. The elements of the quilt, pointing towards the centre, beckon me to travel the passageway to its conclusion. What do I hope to find there? What lesson does the denim corridor want to teach me?

The cotton fibre of the cloth comes from the Earth. So does the indigo dye. The work says to me that Nature means us to live in balance, in accord with James Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis. This surely is the revelation awaiting us at the end of the denim corridor.

IAN STEWART
Tara Glastonbury

*stitchandyarn*

Quilt (recycled denim)
Together they stand at the rail
on the deck of the ship
that they worked - my dad and
maternal grandfather wearing
the embroidered woollen jumpers
that were the uniform of the
cross channel boats.

Just after the war which had
seen dad in action in the
Mediterranean and grandad
trapped in France.

But that was all behind them
now and Snowy would marry Pauline
and join the baby boom that would
spawn a generation of change and
enquiry. And that in its own time
would grow old and suffer loss
and pitch and toss through
the latter waves of life.

The terrace house on the avenue
would be sold and all that was taken
were a box of photos of ships and
lovers and kids and an old
woollen seaman’s jumper.

MAURICE CORLETT
Have Poets Left a Patch to Sew?

Photograph provided by Maurice Corlett
IKAT

Transposed, I suppose.
Tuck the turned line
notes through staves
drawing your song
drawn from shadow shelves under thatch
gamelan wafts like trickle or bamboo
frames cradle back to foot
taut by your lit intention
to place this thread this moment.
This moment weathered
whole washed and working worn
and moved,
I fondle
folded.

CASSILY CHARLES
Photograph by Cassily Charles (2017)
I can’t recall exactly how it all started yet I’d like to believe that the soothing sounds of serendipity were serenading us from the very beginning.

Once upon a time now decades ago, its little weave of fibres and my little fibres of being simply found themselves nestling in the same place at the same time, time and time again.

There was no grandiose announcement nor polite introduction just a simple knowing

“Oh there you are; I’ve been waiting for you to come find me”

and so began the story of me and my ‘Ma’.

The sight of my nose swaddled in the sweet scent of cloth swiftly became my toddler trademark, my beloved Ma went everywhere with me during those tender early years. A time when everything seemed so very big it was the small frayed scrap of fabric that magically made the world feel just the right size. In a way I guess it held my hand until I was ready to hold my own. My perfumed home making moments of childhood confusion seemingly fade away as it brushed the colour of love against my fragile skin.

On the rare occasions when we were parted, Ma would be secretly whisked away from sight, resulting in an eager search for my lost treasure. I would follow the lingering trail it had woven to the clothes line and there you would find me waiting impatiently on tippy toes in silent stare for the sun to hurry up and finish its job so I may be reunited with the missing piece of me. Sometimes I prayed it would miraculously fall so I may rescue it, sometimes, that I may fly and somehow it would rescue me.

My childhood story remains soothed by Ma’s silk, the gifts it shared still threading their way through the fabric of my adult life - tugging me ever so gently, to no longer hold so tight to the imperfect tales of stories past.

I’ve long wondered if I ever really did let it slip or did it simply choose to leap?

Maybe not knowing the answer is the real magic of a cloth called Ma.

INGRID BRUCKNER
MAGIC CARPET

This quilt of civilization is like a magic carpet.

Fabricated upon the warp and weft of a social foundation,
strong with humanity.

Woven through loving kindness, compassionate wisdom, soul stuff.

Myriad form and infinite splendour present as patchwork cloth.

It is a thing well-worn, as generations of all-being forever unfold, into this great sieve of life.

No matter the occasional greedy moth hole, the odd torn seam, or ragged gold brocade.

Look beyond the banshee wailing ego and tantrum squall,
that punctuates the cyclical rise and fall.

After all,
its vibrant whole is un tarnished.

STUART BOAG
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Have Poets Left a Patch to Sew?