

A stitch in modern times

Slipstitch exhibition a contemporary take on embroidery

Friday, 3 March 2017

A modern Australian take on the ancient art of embroidery will be featured in a new Tweed Regional Gallery & Margaret Olley Art Centre exhibition starting this Friday.

Slipstitch presents an Australian perspective by a new generation of artists, with recent work from Mae Finlayson, David Green, Lucas Grogan, Alice Kettle, Tim Moore, Silke Raetze, Demelza Sherwood, Matt Siwerski, Jane Theau, Sera Waters, Elyse Watkins and Ilka White.

Moore flew headlong into the art form when he immigrated to Australia several years ago. After leaving his pencil case at Heathrow Airport and unable to sketch on board flight JAL214, he improvised and did his first embroidery on a sick bag using an inflight sewing kit. Moore landed at Sydney's Kingsford Smith airport with four embroidered sick bags and a new skill.

In recent years, contemporary artists in Australia have embraced embroidery because of its capacity for poignant and reflective narrative. Its re-emergence is part of a broader questioning of the hierarchy of materials, which has gained momentum since the 1990s. Embroidered objects have often been read literally and relegated within a domestic framework. However, new contemporary works break down preconceptions by exploring what embroidery can become once it transcends the regularity of pattern and decoration. Historically, embroidery like the Bayeux Tapestry was used as a tool for personal or political narratives.

Slipstitch introduces contemporary audiences to embroidery's capacity for drawing and communication. The exhibition showcases a wide range of hand and machine embroidery, from incredibly detailed to pared back. Many of the artists in *Slipstitch* utilise relatively simple hand embroidery methods and a very limited 'palette' of stitches, using a needle and thread in simple and intuitive ways as a drawing tool.

Grogan, Watkins, Siwerski and Sherwood describe a physical, conceptual and creative freedom in using this humble technology; the needle. Other artists develop work in response to digital photographs, or layer direct digital printed or heat transferred imagery, building up three-dimensional layers by using embroidery and stitch.

The touring exhibition has been made possible by Creative Victoria, through the Touring Victoria program, and a full colour catalogue publication has been generously supported by the Gordon Darling Foundation.

Slipstitch is on exhibition at Tweed Regional Gallery & Margaret Olley Art Centre from 3 March – 18 June 2017.

This exhibition is an Ararat Regional Gallery & NETS Victoria touring exhibition, curated by Dr. Belinda von Mengersen. This exhibition has been supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria. *Slipstitch* is also supported by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and through the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments. NETS Victoria also receives significant in-kind support from the National Gallery of Victoria.

Contact: Art Gallery Director, Susi Muddiman (02) 6670 2792 or Communications Officer – Media, Fran Silk on (02) 6670 2575

2 Mistral Road (Corner of Tweed Valley Way) in Murwillumbah South. PO Box 816 Murwillumbah, NSW 2484
P: (02) 6670 2790 F: (02) 6670 2797 tweedart@tweed.nsw.gov.au artgallery.tweed.nsw.gov.au
The Gallery and Café is open from Wednesday to Sunday 10am – 5pm.

Public programs:

Opening celebrations and floortalk: Everyone is invited to attend the opening celebrations on Friday 3 March, starting with an exhibition preview floor talk by Curator Dr Belinda von Mengersen at 5.15pm (DST), followed by refreshments. Dr Mengersen will officially open the exhibition at 6pm.

Community Stitch Up: Sunday 11 June 2017 at 11am. Bring your craft project along for discussion and sharing. Meet other makers, pick up new ideas and enjoy time nurturing your current passion or a neglected piece you would like to finish.

Image credits:

Jane Théau, *Swimming Boy*, 2013, Machine embroidery, sewing thread and wire. Stitch: free machine embroidery, straight lockstitch, 38 x 50cm (variable). Photographer: Jane Théau

Lucas Grogan, *The Universe Quilt*, 2013, cotton thread on laminated cotton cloth, Stitch: straight stitch, seed stitch, satin stitch, French knots, 200cm x 175cm (variable). Purchased with the assistance of the Robert Salzer. Foundation and Ararat Rural City Council, 2013. Ararat Regional Art Gallery Collection. Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Ararat Rural City



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