ENTWINE

TEXTILE EXHIBITION

KARIKE ASHWORTH
ANDREA BAUMERT HOWARD
MORGAN BUNDY WRIGHT
DONNA DAVIS
MIEKE DEN OTTER
DEBORAH EDDY
LYNDA FLEWELL-SMITH
NORTON FREDERICKS
EMMA GARDNER
CAROLYN KERR
MARTA LARZABAL
ANNAMARIA MAYS
CLAUDIA MAZZOTTA
EMILY MCGUIRE
MIKAYLA NAGORCKA
RACHEL NORTH
KARINA SELJAK
JEANETTE STOK
DONNA TOUSSAINT
MICHELLE VINE
KELLIE WOLFE

Emily McGuire, *ADIDAS*, 2022, Found cotton T-shirt, cotton thread, 31 x 27 x 20 cm, Image courtesy of the artist.

4-30 MARCH 2023

An Ipswich Community Gallery program

Supported by

Ipswich ART Gallery

IPSWICH COMMUNITY GALLERY

Textile Art:
Where the Historical and Contemporary Entwine

by Bree Di Mattina

Before fiberoptic cables, nano-technology textiles, or even the simplest of fabrics, there was twine. String, cordage, thread, twine; regardless of the term, humans have been making and using twine for hundreds of thousands of years.

As a noun, *twine* is a twisted string made from multiple, smaller strands. As a verb, *twine* implies the wrapping of one item around a passive other. *Entwine* is a mutual action of two things wrapping around one another.

Each of the artists in *ENTWINE are* channeling the ancient history of twine and their own tangled associations with textiles, reimagining them in the contemporary, in an act of mutual manipulation. In return, the works in this exhibition challenge our understanding of textiles. From early associations with women's artistic practices and feminist art, textile art now bridges gender boundaries and encompasses a plethora of subjects and materials, some unconventional.

The tension between public and private is probed by Deborah Eddy, Morgan Bundy Wright, Jeanette Stok and Claudia Mazzotta. A house dress, a frock only fit to be worn at home while cooking or cleaning, is made by Deborah Eddy from cleaning cloths and builder's twine. A symbol of both strength and confinement, "*H is for Housedress" (2021),* explores gendered roles and divisions of labour within the home, divisions which continue to spill into public roles.

Morgan Bundy Wright echoes the humorous sentiment of Eddy's work in *"[House] Work" (2023),* juxtaposing men's ties against an old broom. Jeanette Stok, in *"Legato" (2022)*, combines traditional embroidery techniques with industrial materials, probing and stretching the accepted divisions between public and domestic. Reusing old textiles Mazzotta, in *"Artist and motherhood entwined in the everyday" (2022)*, records her work as a mother through her meticulous stitches imbuing the labour of motherhood with tangible value.

The labour of care is further exposed by Donna Toussaint in her participatory French Knitting demonstration "*Starting a conversation, who cares" (2023)*. The artist will test her endurance by French Knitting on an oversized loom for six hours, inviting viewers to engage in the physicality of knitting, drawing comparisons between prolonged knitting and the endurance required to be a carer.

The interaction of humans and the environment is a core concern for several artists. Andrea Baumert Howard's works "*Remnants",* and "*Discarded" (2023)* and Emily McGuire's "*Adidas" (2022)* highlight the environmental disaster humans face from fast fashion and textile waste. Mikayla Nagorcka investigates the links between coral health and environment, visualising the effects of coral bleaching in her tactile yet subdued work "*Anthozoa" (2023)*. While Annamaria Mays "*Handmade Brushes" (2022)* carefully collects, curates and repurposes items to create new works, imbuing them with new value and saving them from landfill.

Utilising natural dyes derived from eucalyptus and local natural fibres, Rachel North's *"To Love a Sunburnt Country" (2022),* and Mieke den Otter's "*Thread Landscape" (2022),* explore their links to place. Building upon this concept, Lynda Flewell-Smith wove *"Blue Horizons" (2005),* from yarn she reared, harvested, spun, and dyed. Flewell-Smith explores the relationship between alternative lifestyles and contemporary society, creating a work which is both conceptually rigorous and functional. The complexities of the natural world and the fragility of ecosystems is explored by Donna Davis in *"Intertwined" (2017)*. Davis weaves delicate representations of fungi found near Ipswich which are associated with the endangered Swamp Tea-tree. The ephemeral nature of fungi and the precarious position of the Swamp Tea-tree are echoed in the delicate weave of root systems.

The affective potential of textiles is mobilised in the deeply personal works of Norton Fredericks *"Quandong Abstraction"* (2023)", Marta Larzabal *"I need medication" (2020),* Emma Gardner *"She Lingered for a While, (Baba Yaga)" (2020)*, Carolyn Kerr *"SISTER 3" (2019)* and Karike Ashworth *"And don't forget to smile!" (2023)*.

Exploring culture, sexuality, grief, guilt, illness and loss, these artists exploit the hundreds of thousands of years of human bodily proximity to textiles and the emotions bound therein.

Fredericks' *"Quandong Abstraction" (2023),* explores his dual Indigenous and Anglo heritage through felted wool (an introduced species) vessels, modeled on the seeds of the native quandong. The wool used in the felt is dyed using natural eucalyptus and quandong dyes. The combination of native and imported materials gives a visual representation of the artist's heritage.

Karina Seljak's *"Stick Together" (2023)*, Kellie Wolfe's *"Groovy circles" (2022),* and Michelle Vine's *"Blue (Bimm Bamm Boop)" (2021),* remind us of the tactile appeal of textiles. Seljak's work *"Stick Together" (2023)* utilizes patchwork and weaving, creating a queer rainbow blanket. The comfort of a blanket is used to bring safety and warmth to queer communities. Vine reminds visitors of the importance of physical connections, her sculptures respond as if alive, reconnecting us with the essential nature of touch.

In *ENTWINE* the artists weave, stitch, knot, and loop their works, drawing on the longevity of textiles and their contemporary expressive potential. The artists, overcoming and exploiting historical associations, encourage visitors to rediscover their own material memories, experiencing textiles in a new light.

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