

## Exhibitions

**Embroidery 2000 Lytham Heritage Centre  
Lytham, Lancashire, UK**

**April 2009**

I came upon this exhibition by accident while visiting relatives in Lytham. It was obviously meant to be because, although small, it was full of little gems. Group exhibitions often suffer from a lack of selection and tend to be something of a mixed bag but this group must have very talented members – it was all good. The work was well chosen for the venue which was in the centre of this little seaside town and so brought in lots of visitors who had no idea that they were looking at textiles. Demonstrations of stitch techniques reinforced this message. Impossible, as ever to mention everybody but here are some of my favourites.

Elizabeth Rayton, who trained in printing techniques for textiles, still 'sees' in this way, using layers of colour and texture to build her pieces. Featuring leaves and fan shapes she has a good eye for colour and design, as you can see in this piece on the right.



Pauline Parker has long been a favourite textile artists and here she presented a series of work based on shells and shell shapes. This is a fraught subject and can be difficult to handle but here it was presented as delicate mono-tonal studies which repaid further inspection. She was inspired towards this theme by her son who is a geologist (another coincidence as my son is a geologist too). She examined the structure of shells, the growth patterns and this led to a feeling of depth and sediment – layers of the earth.



Jackie Cardy is another high-calibre artist (you'll have seen her articles in WoW) and her colourful pieces, mostly featuring appliqué, were a good choice for this exhibition. Her interpretation of the 'Structures' theme was to look at the underlying structure of pattern and she concentrated on the patterns of 1950s textiles to explore this theme.



Jackie also showed some of her explorations of working in a new direction, using hand rolled felt and taking Moroccan window grilles as a design theme. These pieces had an unresolved quality – that's not a criticism – it's interesting to see the beginning of a new range of work.



Gill Yates found that a workshop with Jan Miller of the Practical Study Group was a catalyst for a body of work based on studies of garments from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. This ranges from museum collections to charity shop cast offs. Gill called her work for this exhibition 'The Body Wrapped', a good title as you can sense the form beneath through the layers of clothing depicted. Her drawing skills are exceptional and the painterly quality that she achieves is austere and beautiful, cutting through to the essence of the garment and presenting it in well balanced compositions.



It is not possible to mention all the artists and the photography was a little difficult but I'm sure you can see that this was a really lovely exhibition that deserves a higher profile. Perhaps we will see them at the Knitting & Stitching shows one day soon? I'll leave you with a glimpse of Margaret Kay's strong monochrome piece 'Strata' (below right) and the haunting water-colours of Louise Swindells which were given the lightest touch of hand stitch to enhance but not overwhelm.



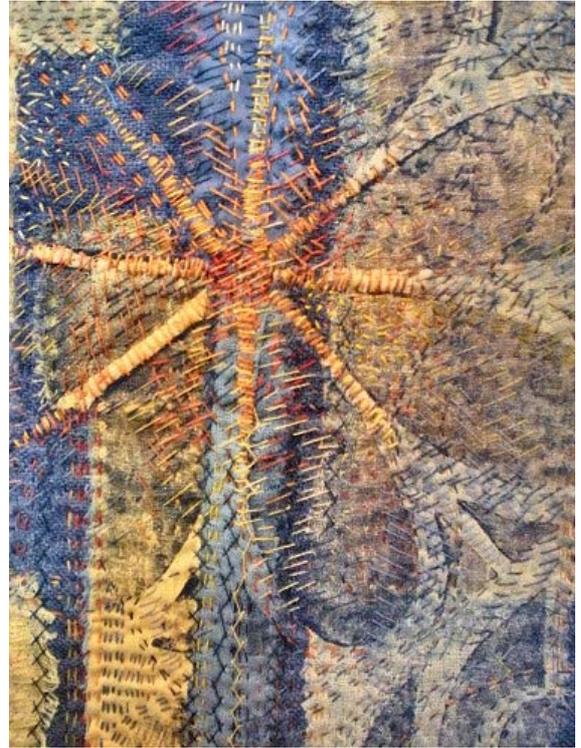
## Ramster Embroidery Exhibition Ramster, Chiddingfold, Surrey

There's nothing quite like the Ramster exhibition. Organiser Miranda Gunn says that her aim is to present work from top-flight artists alongside embroideries by lesser-known stitchers such as Susan Macarthur whose 'Curled Female Nude' is shown here. So you get a wonderful mix among the hundreds of exhibits. There really is something for everyone and, if you can't find your kind of work here, you must be hard to please!

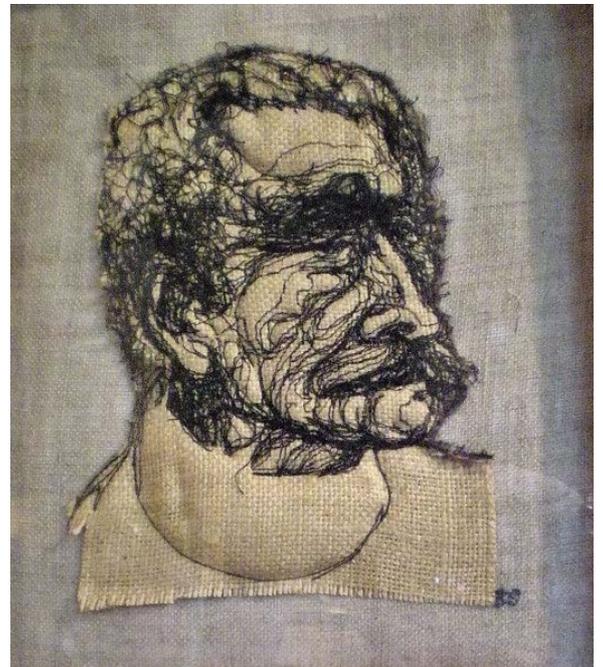
The work is selected but not stringently so, which give encouragement to all abilities. It's hung in Royal Academy-style, pushed together so that you get the most work in the space available. The atmosphere in this historic building is really special, although the down-side is that the lighting is not brilliant. Ramster has a really special feeling. It's where you meet people you haven't seen for ages, where you have delicious cream scones, where you walk in the wonderful gardens and then come back for another look at the embroidery. It was good to see so many red spots and coach parties arriving. We must support this - it must carry on. Rather than the usual review, we've got a wide selection of the work for maximum interest.



**Liz Ashurst, 'Wild in Poland',  
above, with detail right**



**Shirley Weston, 'Echoes of Ironbridge'  
with detail**



**Barbara Siedlecka, Face, above  
Jenny Bullen, Magical Stones left**



Left: Liz Harding, 'Red Leaf in the Park'

Above: Ruth Collins, 'Intoxicating Colour'



Left: Mavis Walker, 'The Seven Ages of Woman'

Above: Alison Hird, 'Grandiflora'