

## Exhibitions

### Mapping the Future, Where are you now?

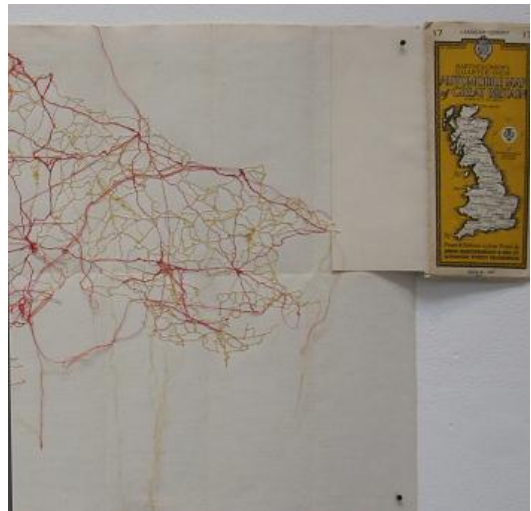
23 February – 24 March 2012

The Brewhouse, Gallery, Taunton, Somerset, England

There can't be many people who don't have an interest in maps. Whether it is a purely practical interest in the means of getting somewhere or a delight in the maps of old with their crests and motifs, it makes a great title for an exhibition. Add on all the personal routes we have travelled and you have a concept that offers fascinating stories, some told, many open to personal interpretation, others that make you think and consider your own journey. This theme was interpreted in many different ways and in a multitude of media such as hand and machine stitching, weaving, quilting, knitting and drawing.

Maps and journeys were taken literally by many of the exhibitors with a particularly good example *Map Drawing, Cardigan – Cardiff 1952* by Shellie Holden, based on an old road map of Wales. The main roads were machine stitched and then the work was turned upside down, revealing the bobbin stitching and reversing the map. This left interesting trails and strands which added to the translation.

High up on my wow factor list was Claire Crompton's *Sheep Country*. I nearly missed it as you had to be facing the right way to 'get' the aspect. The large gallery at the Brewhouse makes sensible hanging difficult and, while great for towering constructions, creates a jumble of plinths for most of the rest. Claire's three-dimensional knitted landscape was complete with hills and trees, presented as contours, with each slice represented in different fleece and the contours showing the rise and fall of the fortunes of the wool industry. It was very different and very lovely.



Others took more of a three-dimensional approach. Liz Harding's pictorial homage to a dog walk was very well done. *Tiggy's Walk* (detail below) is an evocative piece which took you along with her through a quiet, bleached-out landscape which imparted a sense of early morning with few people about. The feeling of familiarity and affection for this place shone through. Not a great deal of stitching but there was no great requirement for it and the lack of detail added to the dream-like quality.



Many of the exhibits used the full height of the gallery space and Liz Hewitt's *Life is a Journey in Another's Footsteps* showed a stitched strip map soaring to the rafters. A series of marks represented the traces left behind as we travel.

Another exhibit that reached for the sky was Carolyn Sibbald's *Butterfly Ball*, a clever and visually attractive structure, based on chaos theory - yes, it's that damn butterfly up to its tricks again. The chaos theme was linked to cultures and beliefs and the work consisted of die-cut shapes, with lots of butterflies cut from maps and other relevant papers. It presented its chaos in a gentle way and the reflective base offered altered aspects which suited the theme. I prefer to photograph exhibition reviews in situ but it's not easy in this gallery; I hope the pic on the right gives an idea of its charm.



In Dawn Mason's *Loss 1,2,3*, small exquisite hand stitched pieces represented a landscape of loss. Housed in the cutlery cases that used to contain silver spoons and cake-forks, they remind us of a more genteel past and stress the fact that hand stitching itself is in decline. The faded colours and the well chosen words contribute to a triptych where the pieces all work beautifully together.



Another star was *Joyce* by Jayne Butler, above, which told a fascinating story of her mother's drive from Devon to Somalia with all her children in tow. The machine embroidered work contained fragments of a life, including a piece of lace made by her mother. It was a wonderfully designed and stitched piece but I felt it stood strongly on its own and had no need of the flashing lights which represented the Devil's Rope (barbed wire) although I liked the idea of this as a symbol of constraint.

Sue Bradley had the idea of documenting *Everywhere I have Ever Lived*, a collaged map of her life showing the houses and many other personal relevant images. I'm not sure whether it was hung quite as intended as there were some rather strange finishing techniques among the otherwise lovely stitching and it didn't quite match her hanging instructions – which themselves were a work of art. Hanging this piece in the café, a very scruffy area, did it no favours and also wiped out the felt works shown there.

*A Route Through 2012* by Susi Bancroft was small but absolutely perfect – she has exceptional drawing skills. It needed a close look as the base was made up of collaged bus tickets which were allowed to show through here and there. Colour, form and the loopy threads all added up to a piece with a real (although gentle) kick.



There is lots to see in this exhibition and, from the moment you enter the doors to be greeted by Alicia Merrett's colourful quilts, see the delightful iPad doodles of Sue Green (worked on train journeys), enjoy the innovations of the digital Tweave piece, it is an exhibition with a difference. I wish I had room to mention everyone and I wish I had been able to spend more time there.

There is just a little space to show the Pom Pom Tree outside the Brewhouse – where man-made pompoms vie with the tree's own efforts in a colourful explosion of pompoms that mapped the way to the station. I think this was Alison Harper and Jane Barker's project but it injected an often lacking element of humour.

Maggie Grey

See more about the exhibition at [www.mappingthefuturewhereareyou.wordpress.com](http://www.mappingthefuturewhereareyou.wordpress.com)



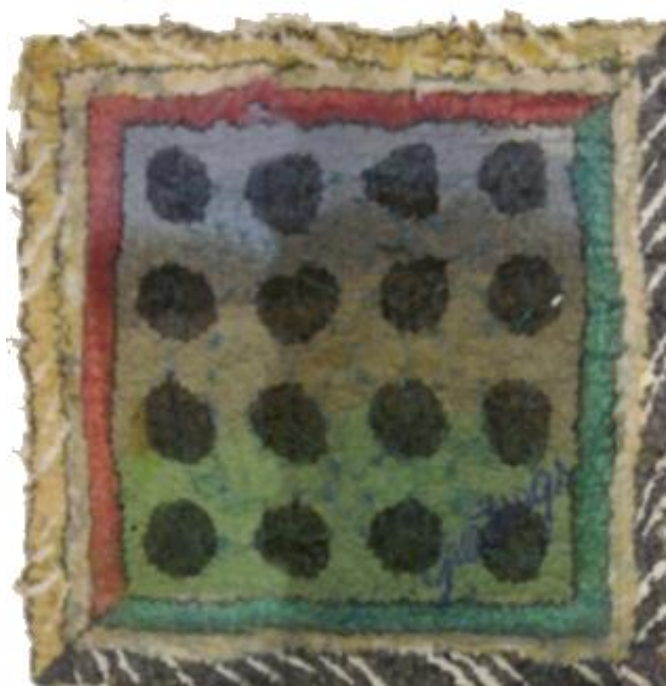
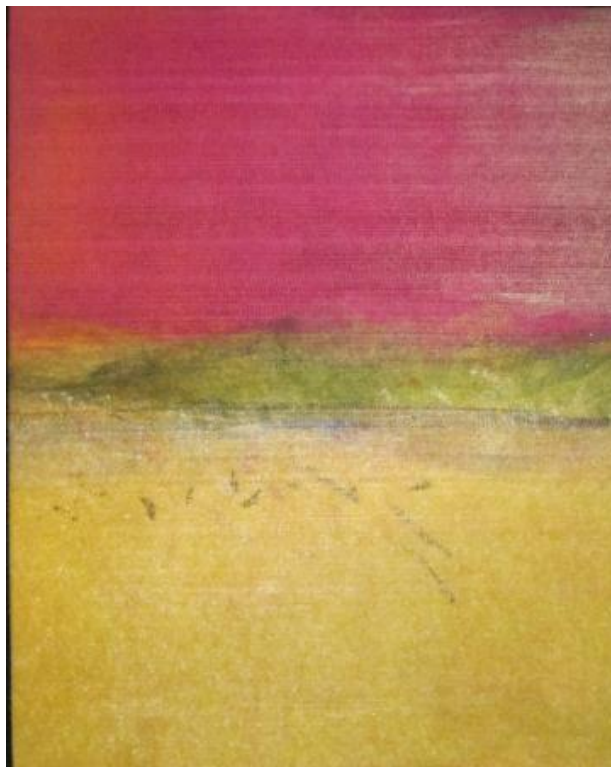
## Jeanette Appleton at Art Van Go, November 2011

We popped into Art Van go recently and were lucky enough to catch the end of their exhibition of Jeanette Appleton's work. I have always admired her and was lucky enough to do a felting course with her some years ago.

This was a retrospective look at an impressive body of work – a legacy of a larger exhibit at the Knitting & Stitching show last year.

Her work suits the intimate setting of the AVG gallery, where the larger, more eye-catching pieces (see *Marginal Land Series, Between IV*, right) grab your initial attention and allow a smooth transition into the far gallery where the smaller treasures invite closer perusal.

Another in the *Marginal Land Series, Greetings II*, is shown below. A smaller work, with merino wool and chiffon scarves, felted and machine stitched to create a simple but pleasing design. I do like the way the borders are formed in this study.

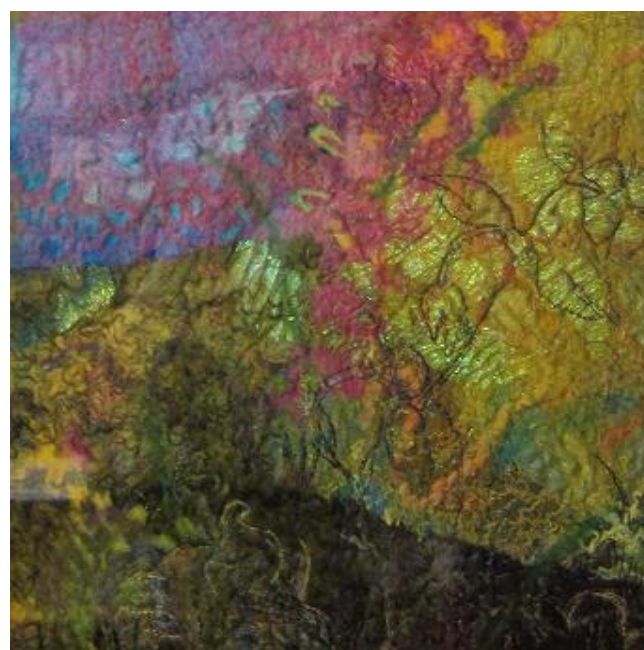


These pics are from her Botanical series, the piece on the right is called *Do not water 2007*, with needle felt, print, plant fibre fabric flower petals.

Below you can see the very colourful *Plantas de la Alpurjarrus 2009*, constructed from wool, fabrics and stitch. There is more stitching in this piece and I think one Jeanette's strengths is her ability to show the versatility of her principal medium – felt.

These delightful pieces are a little bonus that I couldn't resist sharing and provide a complete contrast to the Mapping the Future, Where Are You Know exhibition. I think that Jeanette Appleton, workwise at least, is in a very good place.

Maggie Grey



**Don't forget to look in to Slader's Yard, West Bay, Dorset, where Yvonne Morton has some great new work based on the Foundling Museum in London. On until 15<sup>th</sup> April.**