

## Drawn Thread

### **Janet Brereton (*Exhibited with artisan September 1974*)**

#### *Red Form* 1971

Cotton rope, wood

1800 x 770 x 100 mm

*Lent by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney*

*Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts/Crafts Board, Australia Council, 1987*

#### *Modern Woman* 1991

cotton rope

1970 x 2020 x 45 mm

*Lent by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney*

*Gift of Kurt Brereton, 2001*

**Janet Brereton** (1933-1992) has been a major force in creating an awareness of textiles in Australian art practice. She set up a tapestry workshop in 1969 and from then on produced a tapestry nearly every year until 1991.

Janet used the same technique for all her tapestries. She would map her final artwork onto graph paper, counting each knot so that she could estimate the yardage of cord and quantity of colours to dye. The rope was 24mm circumference, as large as could be adequately manipulated by hand. The warp ropes were tied to an aluminium rod which rolled up electronically as she worked. Janet used half-hitch, Z and M knots with larkshead knots to finish the base of the tapestries.

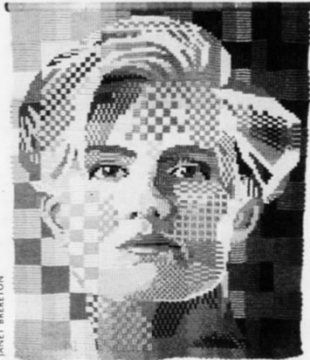
References to nature are always a feature of her work. There are implicit connections between the fibre ropes and knots that she uses to create the tapestries and the natural forms that are depicted in them.

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The Sydney Morning Herald (Sydney, New South Wales, Australia) • 09 May 1998, Sat • Page 287

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### Object lesson



LAST year, 494 people received kidney transplants in Australia. But more than three times that number are still awaiting a suitable donor and will remain on a waiting list for one to three years. Australia has one of the lowest organ donor rates of any developed country, despite the fact that the success rate of our transplants is among the highest in the world.

It's why the Australian Kidney Foundation is trying to raise its profile with a set of colourful organ donor cards produced from designs donated by Australian artists Ken Done, Pro Hart, Jack Absalom, Roxanne Minchin and Janet Brereton. Brereton, who died in 1992, suffered from polycystic kidney disease for much of her adult life. Throughout her illness she crafted gigantic and labour-intensive rope tapestries. The tapestry pictured left, which will appear on the donor cards, was her last work and is a massive 230 cm x 194 cm. An exhibition of Brereton's work will show at Town Hall House (corner Druitt and Kent streets, city) from Friday until June 13. For details, call 9247 9126.

For information on the donor cards, which will be launched on May 31 to coincide with the Australian Kidney Foundation's 30th anniversary, call 1800 682 531. If you would like to become a potential donor, don't forget to discuss it with your family so they're aware of your wishes. *Katie Pollock*



Red Form 1971



Modern Woman 1991

## **Ruth Stoneley (Exhibited with artisan 1985, 2003, 2005)**

*Shot to Pieces* 1986

Cotton and paint, Polyester Batting, hand-quilted patchwork, log cabin technique

1580 mm x 1450 mm

Lent by Stoneley Family Collection

*(Untitled)* early 1990's

Assorted fabrics, hand-quilted, embellished with beads, ribbons, lace motifs, love heart charms, ribbons, sequins

895 mm x 745 mm

Lent by Stoneley Family Collection

## Ruth Stoneley: A Stitch in Time

Exploring the work of leading Brisbane quilt-maker Ruth Stoneley, 'A Stitch in Time' tells a significant story about quilting in Queensland.

Ruth Stoneley (1940–2007) was an inspirational figure, both in terms of her innovative creations and as an active member of the Brisbane quilting community; she connected with other makers both through Patchwork Supplies, her Highgate Hill shop, and through her role as a teacher. While she came to quilting later in life, only committing to her craft full-time from 1982, she quickly made up for lost time, making prolifically and exhibiting widely in Australia and overseas.

Stoneley was a maker who always had a project on the go, usually several – from her internationally-renowned art quilts to more modest functional pieces, which were nonetheless embellished with characteristic flair. She combined a variety of approaches in her work: from pared-back pieces, which redeployed traditional techniques, to those where intricate detail and decorative flourishes alluded to personal feelings. While it may be a stereotype that textiles, more than any other medium, signify femininity, for Stoneley they also provided a powerful avenue of communication, as some of her titles explicitly attest. Through fabric, she explored her life and broader issues, in particular those relating to her lived experience as a woman.

Ruth Stoneley consciously situated herself at the intersection of art and craft, and her influential work demonstrated the creative potential for shaping dialogues about both. 'A Stitch in Time' features important pieces from Stoneley's practice, showing her transition from early experiments with the contained patterns of traditional quilt-making to the abstract and expressive works of later years. There is thus a tension in her work – between a celebration of the decorative and the personal, between the functional and the language of the feminine, and a rejection of all these things.



Shot to Pieces (detail)



Shot to Pieces



(Untitled)



detail

## **Jill Kinnear (exhibited with artisan 2013) (taught Sue-Ching Lascelles)**

*Veil* 2002

screen printed ceramic ink on 96 glass panels, each 2400 mm x 1500 mm

Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane.

Department of Sport and Recreation, Queensland State Government

Architects: HOK SPORT + VENUE + EVENT with PDT Architects in association

Public Art Project Manager: Keith Ward, ARCIMIX

Curator: Glen Henderson

## *Reinforcement* 2020

Double sided stole, digitally printed onto silk charmeuse

1145 mm x 2870 mm

The shawl designs were inspired by a woven metal window grille seen in Spain. This strong and substantial architectural structure shielded the interior domestic space from the exterior and deflected the sun's harsh rays. The grille divided public and private space, yet still allowed light to pass through.

For thousands of years textiles were symbols of power, defining the wealth and status of world economies. Laboriously crafted from raw materials in domestic and public spheres by both genders, they were sacrificed to Gods, substituted for written language, traded for military favours, appeased the newly conquered and accompanied the deceased to the afterlife.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Industrial Revolution excised the traditions of the handmade and severed the connection between textiles and the public knowledge of their processes. Because the making of commercial textiles is now unseen, unknown and consequently unconsidered, handmade textiles are often the only reference the public has to the discipline. In recent decades, exceptional levels of skill and innovation have increased the visibility of these works yet they have continued to be assigned to the pejorative role of 'women's work'; a term that suggests domestic tasks associated solely with women, disregarded and unworthy of financial recompense.

These designs were first constructed in different papers, weaving each hand cut shaped strand into a larger structure. The mirror silver structure is 1m in length; in essence that design is a self-portrait, fragmenting my reflection as I photographed the surface. Drawings of these structures helped to resolve the backgrounds. The photographs were then digitally constructed into the designs: hard and soft surfaces juxtapose in the final works. Textiles are my way of engaging with the world and contributing to it; like the Spanish window grille, they provide me with an interface between the external and internal. Printed onto silk, one of the world's most ancient fibres long associated with military defence, they are both a deflection and a protection, an armour, that allow me to continue the creative process despite the persistent lack of understanding that surrounds my discipline and its history.

### **Veil**

The work clothes the south east corner of the building to create a light shroud which extends over the glass panels so that it appears as an external layer of the building but is part of its 'fabric' and structure. Photographed from a small torn muslin model and enlarged photographically, Veil was screen-printed in opaque white ceramic ink onto 96 separate panels. The work appears trapped within the glass, translucent, giving the impression of a veil: another thin, light layer to the structure of the building.

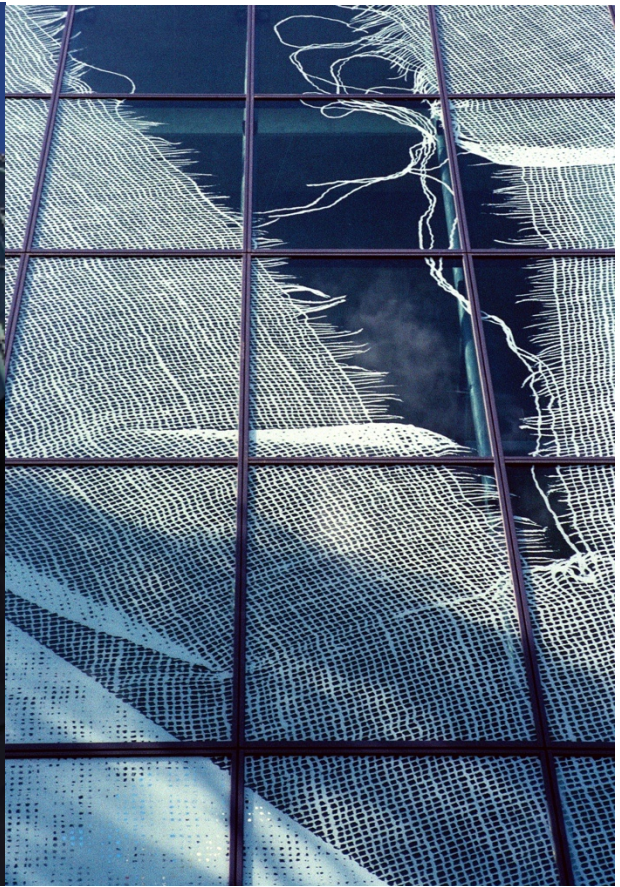
Weaving is one of the most ancient crafts, and woven items such as garments, flags and shrouds became metaphors and symbols for the complexities of human existence, expressing and visualizing spirituality, religion, ethnicity and society.

The gigantic tear in the fabric therefore can be read in numerous ways, and through this multiplicity of meanings can be seen as a metaphor for the concerns and spiritual beliefs of each community. The ancient Jewish custom of renting the garment over the heart as a sign of grief is as potent a symbol to Jews as the rented veil in the temple is to Christians.

This tear in the cloth publicly acknowledges and openly accepts the grief that exists in all the communities concerned with this burial site. As such, it declares the site to be vitally significant, and sacred, to these communities. It therefore contributes to the 'veiling' of this section of the building in its purpose as a stadium, and pronounces another essential use for this wall – to act as a tangible recognition of painful history and an appeasement and conductor for the expression of grief in the present.



Veil



Veil (Detail)



Reinforcement



**Mona Ryder (on the board for artisan 1970's. 1980's, exhibited 2005, 2018)**

*The Illustrated Land* 1990 – 2020

Mixed Media (Leather, paint, synthetic fur, hand stitched canvas, found objects)

Dimensions variable

**The Illustrated Land**

***The Tattooed Man*** was shown in 1990 at the Gold Coast City Art Gallery (now HOTA) when I was living on the Coast. The installation used two hides painted as if they were tattooed male and female skins. They were shown with other sculptural pieces, including an exhaust with rows of large fishhooks, sinkers and lures, a washing machine agitator on a trolley and a wooden stand and platter of fruit (some fruit was from a 1980's painting). The female skin had images of the natural landscape and a brain whereas the male skin's images were foreboding. The arms of which were covered in bombs, the chest in volcanos, snakes and oversized insects crawling up the body.

This work was exhibited the same year as I travelled to America visiting, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Las Vegas. Flying from city to city I was shocked by the landscape below of red and bright green polluted lakes. For me, these were real warning signs but we assumed we were immune. We could not have envisaged the climate changes that are now self-evident.

Throughout my career, I have sporadically reworked individual pieces from previous installations and used them like props, adding to them to create new works. This process gives more clarity/insights or new meanings.

Over the years my work has explored gender politics and memory. There is a sense of theatre in the work building tensions, raising questions and creating a dual sense of disquiet and warmth, with an underlying edge of wry humour.

This installation ***The Illustrated Land*** has been reconfigured from the 1990 installation using part of the title and pieces from 1980 and 1990 and now 2020. The installation is even more seductive using velvet curtains and fur.

Text has always played its part in my work – either in the work or in the naming of installations, exhibitions and sometimes particular pieces. Embroidered text has been used on the folds of the velvet curtains in this installation.

The ***Tattooed Man 1990*** and ***The Illustrated Land 2020*** reference the beauty and the fragility of our relationships with each other and our environment and the tenuous nature of both.



The Illustrated Land (Detail)



The Illustrated Land (Detail)



## **Robert Brain**

*Judith & Holofernes, With Thanks to Mr Caravaggio* 2017

Gros point wool tapestry

800 mm x 1120 mm

***In the Old Testament, Judith seduces the besieging general Holofernes and decapitates him in his bed. A straightforwardly virtuous characterization in the Middle Ages, Judith became a warrior-goddess in the service of political allegory in the Renaissance; the embodiment of female rage in the Baroque era; and the textbook definition of a femme fatale in the late 19th century.***

ROBERT BRAIN was born in Tasmania in 1933 and studied history there and anthropology in London. He has lectured in both English and Italian universities, and worked and studied in the Congo Republic, Cameroun and Mali. He has written a dozen books, including *Friends and Lovers* (1976) and *The Decorated Body* (1979), and translated many works. Robert lived in Italy for many years, where he and his then partner, Adam, restored a sixteenth century Augustine monastery, which became the venue for a summer opera festival, *Musica nel Chiostro*. He now lives in Australia, in the Blue Mountains near Sydney, NSW, with partner Neal Blewett, and spends most of his time making tapestries, many of which are based on his varied life experiences.

Robert Brain's prolific tapestry practice explores themes such as homoeroticism, art history and gender politics and is imbued with irreverent humour and unexpected juxtapositions.

*I have made dozens, perhaps hundreds of tapestries, using an embroidery running stitch – not a cross stitch in sight. My first attempt (fifty years ago) was a simple Union Jack, which I sewed according to the directions accompanying the design.*

*Since then I have not once embroidered*

*by numbers, nor bought a shop pattern. Starting with a straightforward geometric design, I found that there was no longer any need for painstaking stitch counting; I just worked the canvas according to my own preordained conception, either drawn on to the canvas or from an idea in my head.*

*After a while I found I could branch out into less simple designs, which I sewed onto the canvas using the needle as a pencil, an exercise which was much easier than I imagined. Only extremely intricate sections of a canvas needed the technique of a muralist, where the original was transferred, again with the needle and*

*thread, from a small grid paper to the larger canvas. If you unpick my very large tapestries you will never find a fully-drawn design, perhaps just some pentimento marks where I have unpicked a section.*

*Later on I began by merely having a vague conception of what I wanted to do and building up the whole tapestry gradually. I advise every enthusiast embroiderer to try these methods, in order to avoid the tiring, blinding counting of the stitches using a stranger's design. In this way we can rescue embroidery's glum reputation, and move it from the world of fussy, old maids' pretty-pretty patterns to a genuine, gender-free art form. It may also help if, instead of roses, puppies and pretty bridges, our themes reveal surprises, unexpected juxtapositions and, of course, good old erotica.*

*Robert Brain*



Judith & Holofernes, With Thanks to Mr Caravaggio 2017

**Kate Just**

*Shed That Skin* 2008

Metallic thread

3500 mm x 800 mm x 50 mm

*Feminist Fan # 40 Julie Rrap* 2017

Hand knitted yarn, wood, canvas

450 mm x 350 mm

***Kate Just was born in Hartford, CT in 1974 and migrated to Melbourne, Australia in 1994. Just works across sculpture, installation, neon, textiles and photography to produce contemporary art works with feminist themes, but is best known for her inventive and political use of knitting.***

*Primarily focussed on the deployment of traditional craft forms including knitting, sewing, textiles and photo-media in contemporary art works that question histories of female and queer representation through the lens of subjective experience. Past works have included knitted figures, large text sculptures, abstracted forms and collections of knitted skins, tools and armours. Specific to my practice is the use of knitting as an engaging sculptural medium, a poetic or political tool.*

*The Feminist Fan series, was my first foray into complex knitted pictorial work. The series features knitted replicas of famous portraits or artworks featuring feminist artists from around the globe including Sarah Lucas, Pussy Riot, Guerrilla Girls, Cindy Sherman, Lynda Benglis, Juliana Huxtable, Mithu Sen, Tracey Moffatt, Yoko Ono, Hannah Wilke and more. The title Feminist Fan emphasizes my reverence to these artists and feminism, and each carefully stitched picture, featuring over 10,000 stitches and 80 hours work, constitutes a time-intensive act of devotion. As a collection, Feminist Fan forms an intimate family portrait of feminism and of my own influences, in which threads of connection between artists across time periods and cultures emerge.*



Feminist Fan #40 (Julie Rrap)



Shed That Skin

**Karla Dickens**

*Unlucky Bastard* 2017

Mixed Media

Dimensions variable

*Warrior Woman XII* 2017

Mixed Media

300 mm x 180 mm x 100 mm

*WHO'S LUCKY?* The phrase "lucky country" is the base-point from which these works grew. I was grateful and relieved to find that Donald Horne, the man who first coined this famous phrase in 1964, was ironically condemning Australia for its complacency and failure to acknowledge its history. The work comprises three parts: • **The first part, entitled *Unlucky bastard*, consists of a black straight-jacket** adorned with embroidered patches and inscribed text. Each of the three embroidered patches contains an upward-facing white horseshoe imprinted with the word "lucky" and a downward-facing red, black and yellow horseshoe imprinted with the word "bastard". My playful and straight-forward observation is that you are lucky in Australia if you are white and a bastard if you are Aboriginal. I have hand-painted a number of quotes from Horne's book *The Lucky Country* onto the strait-jacket. They are there to remind those who still literally believe in the phrase—of the author's original intension.



Warrior Woman X!!





Beata Batorowicz

*Daddy's WWII Braces* 2002  
Knitting yarn, suede, thread  
Dimensions variable

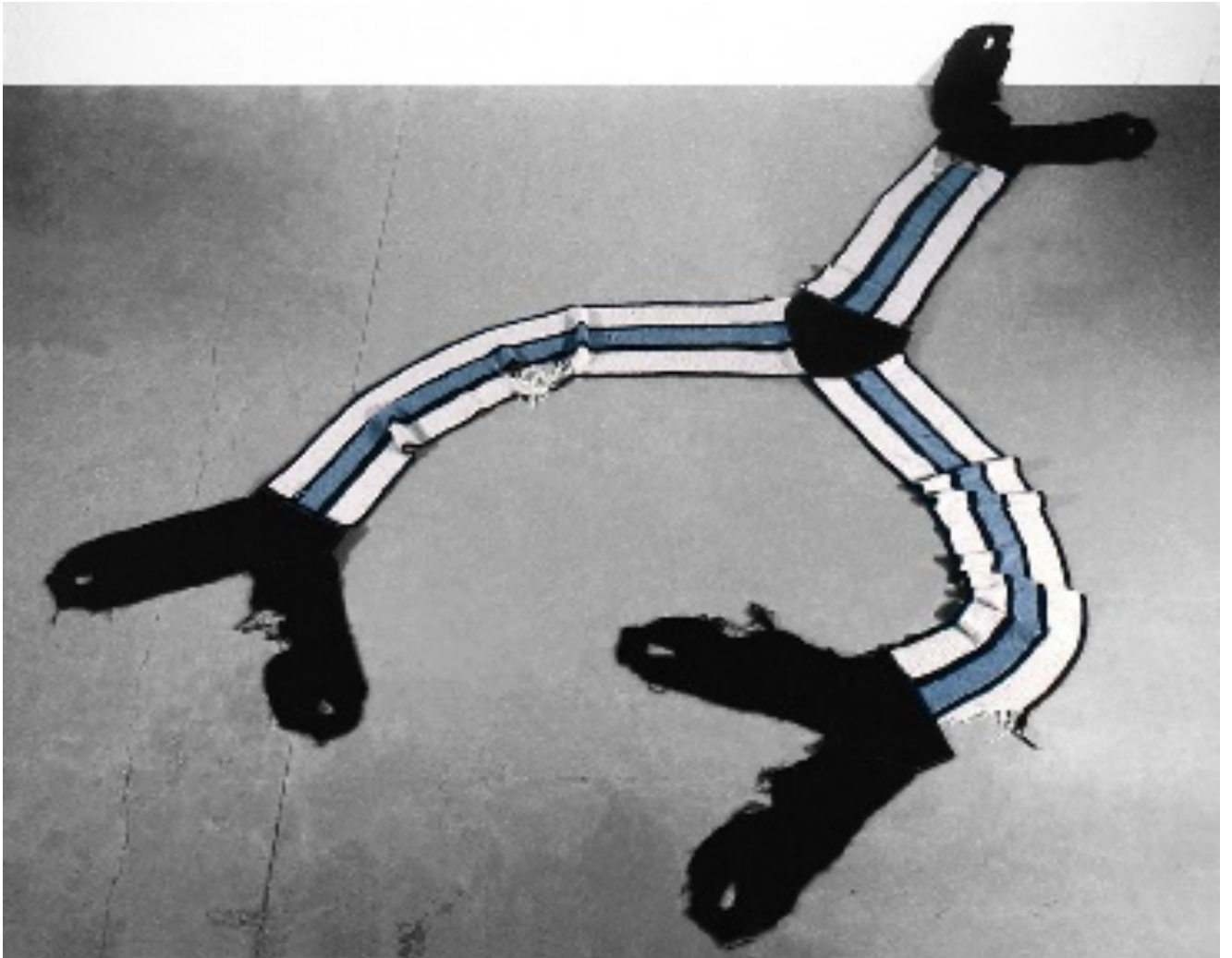
*Chew* 2020  
Fur, leather, cotton  
Dimensions variable

***\*(IMAGE NOT YET AVAILABLE ...a small female rat, installed on a shelf close to the other work, implication that she has chewed the braces)***

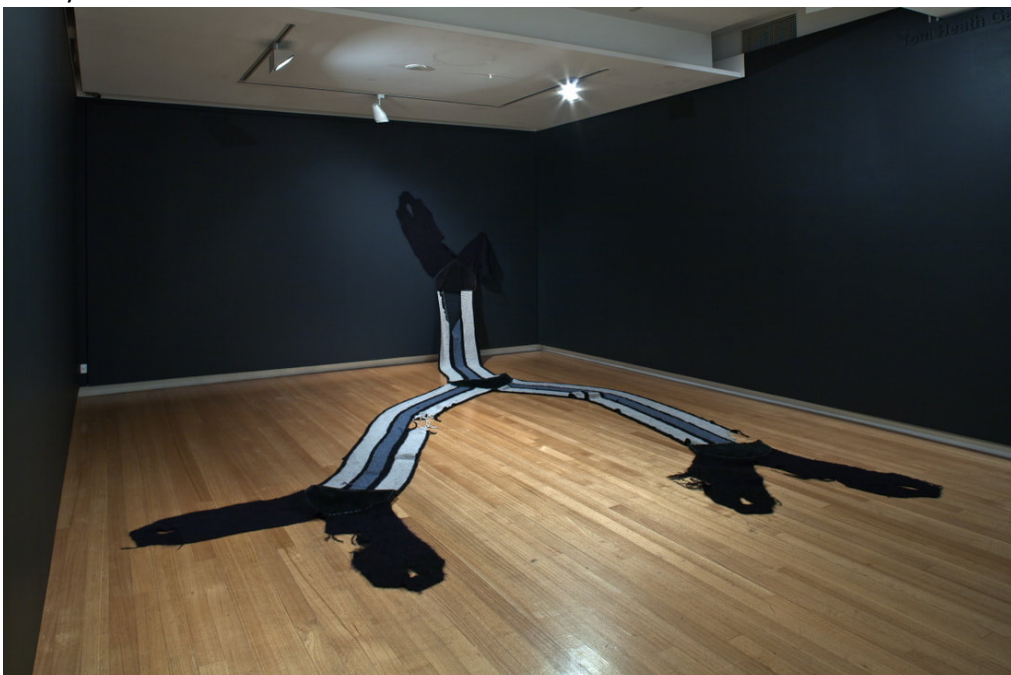
*Beata Batorowicz is a contemporary artist working in textiles and sculptural installations which explore visual storytelling through European fairytales, mythology and folklore. Born in Poland and arriving in Australia at the age of five, Batorowicz creates symbolically charged narratives that interweaves her cultural heritage with her mythology of being the discontented daughter of the late Twentieth century German artist Joseph Beuys. In this fiction, Batorowicz presents dichotomies between the father and daughter, the male and female and the German and Polish within the historical context of WWII. Batorowicz's art practice emphasises the poignant role of subtextual narratives in dispelling the grand narratives of Western art history. Her works such as 'The Trickster' apply personal and mythical stories to create slippages and other spaces where the rich complexity of cultural, historical and gender tales can be retold and experienced in terms of imaginative realms.*



***\*Detail from a different/similar work, in the animal series***



Daddy's WWII Braces



## Sera Waters

*Sampler for a Colonised Land* 2019

Cotton on Linen

1410 mm x 520 mm

*Dribbling Blood* 2010

Felt, sequins, beads, cotton thread

Dimensions variable

**Sera Waters is an Adelaide-based artist and writer. She holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts (First Class Honours) degree from the South Australian School of Art (2000), and a Master of Arts (Art History) from the University of Adelaide (2006). Her postgraduate research (In Tokyo) studied Japanese visions of the monstrous and catastrophic. In 2006 Waters attended the Royal School of Needlework (Hampton Court Palace, Surrey, UK) to study hand embroidery intensively. Through repetitive crafting, her work regularly explores and challenges stitched techniques in a contemporary art context and is characterised by a 'dark meticulousness'.**

### **Sampler for a Colonised Land: (from the Ararat exhibition catalogue)**

Samplers were used from the seventeenth century to educate girls in literacy, morals and into obedience. This sampler uses the simple technique of cross-stitch but creates new patterns for re-education; particularly to draw attention to many types of boundaries which arise from fear-based and possessive ways of occupying land. These boundaries are inheritances from colonisation which continue on in many different forms today.

### **Dribbling Blood**

Plays with the familiar details of fabricated sub-urban reality; juxtaposes motifs connoting specific acts of brutality, witnessed at second hand remove in the safety of the suburban lounge room with the material language of the kitchen, the butchers shop, the bbq (she presents an ambiguous register of "domestic disturbance") blood coloured crystals spill, bright red sequins are stitched, attachments made— thread passing over, under, piercing, drawing, reminding, repairing, reporting—she re-lives and worries over the visceral pleasure of teeth biting into steak, knives slicing through tender flesh, flies swatted, ants crushed underfoot. She refers widely to motifs drawn from shared cultural and personal narratives; with and against the undercurrents of both historical and contemporary tendencies, the undertow of fears and desires that are both simple and complex, ubiquitous and hidden.



Sampler for a Colonised Land



Dribbling Blood



## Sue-Ching Lascelles

*New Skin, Old Moon* 2020

Plastic, Polyfill, thread, felt

Dimensions Variable

*Framed by nostalgic recollections of childhood and the cultural influences from my mother, this work explores themes of identity, cultural confusion and superstition. All of which, have been influential factors in the way I have been raised and continued to view my place in the world.*

*Making this work has led me to take an introspective look at my own experiences of motherhood and how they have been informed by being raised by a Chinese mother in Australia. As an outsider between two cultures and learning what to keep and what to disregard from what has been impressed upon me as I navigate through my own mothering journey.*

*Laden with symbolism, this work also has very literal representations of my personal experiences from childhood. The snakes crafted from Chinese laundry bags in a pattern that is synonymous with dollar shops and moving house, are a vivid memory of being taken to a snake temple when I was a child. Symbolically, snakes are thought to be sacred, possess healing powers and considered to representative of fertility, rebirth and renewal all of which feels like the right descriptors to encompass the mothering experience.*

*A silver shopping bag recreated after the throw away shopping bags that once littered our homes and are piled high in landfill is a direct representation of my mum. She would hoard these bags by the dozens and give them a second life. When I think of her, I think of the grey shopping bag, rustling endlessly from the kitchen, the boot of the car, the dining table. Long after she is gone, these bags will remain.*

*In reference to the children's game 'Snakes and Ladders', among the coalescing snakes and the hands that try to catch them is a tiny ladder cradled carefully on the palm of one hand. Rendered useless by its size, here we find reference to my own experience of motherhood: a loss of self-identity, the burden, guilt and suffocation. As an attempt to find a way out, above there is a man hole escape with a barely visible rope ladder to access it. Again, it is rendered useless and the escape is futile.*

*Here in this work, there is also playful themes of shedding our skin, changing shape, losing ourselves and finding a new self. Influenced by one of Yoko Ono's poems, I find there is a beautiful and deep tenderness to her words in which I have found that heart connection to both my Mother and my child*



## **Michelle Vine**

*Affirmation Tub* 2018 – 2019

cast iron bath tub, faux fur, memory foam, headphones with audio, vocals by the artist, soundscape by Luke Jaaniste

**Michelle Vine** is an installation, performance and photo-media artist. She is interested in how could art function as an antidote to the often negative and harmful messages around gender and body in mainstream Australian culture and media. She is engaging in an artistic speculative inquiry into the notion of a safe space and respite from patriarchy influences

Her current practice is centred on physical touch. Michelle aims to bring awareness to this often overlooked sense while disrupting the dominance of others, such as sight. This interest in touch grew from Michele's lived experience of chronic illness; she has an immune system dysregulation that affects her five senses – her sense of touch being the least impacted. Michelle's practice aims to create playful, positive, embodied art experiences that allow for greater inclusion for audiences of diverse ages and sensory abilities.

“The primacy of touch, its position as our first sense, is, after infancy, overcome by sight. In making touch central to my project, I am investigating how installation art can help recover the power of touch in a safe and positive way. My research asks: how can an exploration of touch in contemporary installation practice reconnect participants to its primacy in human sensory experience?”

Remove your shoes. Climb in. Headphones on. Sink deep. Listen and be affirmed. Relax.

Link to soundtrack: <https://soundcloud.com/user-26273879/affirmation-tub-soundtrack>

