



Anne Griffiths – Contemporary Textile Art – August 2014 Newsletter

Dear All,

Where does the time go? It is already two months since the last newsletter and only a couple of weeks till my holiday, I am so excited – I am going to St. Petersburg - if anyone has ever been or got any interesting information or ideas of places to go and see then please do get in touch. I will no doubt have lots to share when I get back, but if anyone is thinking of going independently then it is a very reasonable price and I can let you know of a great place which will arrange the visa for you, a very daunting when you have no experience!

I think my main highlight since the last newsletter was the Oxford Summer School, the weather was beautiful and it was wonderful to be in a place where there was so many creative people working in such a wide range of subjects from singing and playing the ukulele, painting and drawing, textiles, jewellery making, and willow weaving to name but a few. Do check out the [Summer School website](#) for next year's courses, I know they haven't been finalised yet, but this year's will give you a pretty good idea.

It never ceases to amaze me the different work that comes out of the same basic week, this time we used some of the indigo tie dyed fabrics to make stuffed Suffolk puffs, some of these were definitely turning into sea urchins! The other new sample I made was taken from a facebook post I saw by [Indigo Hacienda San Juan Buenavista, El Salvador](#) so unfortunately not my idea, but I tried to reproduce one of their beautiful seashell hangings on a miniature scale. Here is a [gallery](#) of all the work from this summer school.

I am beginning to think about a second week using the beach as a starting point, there is so much inspiration for samples and ideas for using different materials and techniques. If you feel inspired by all this fantastic work



and would like to come to Cornwall in March, I will be running the [Beachcombing](#) course again from March 13th -20th 2015.

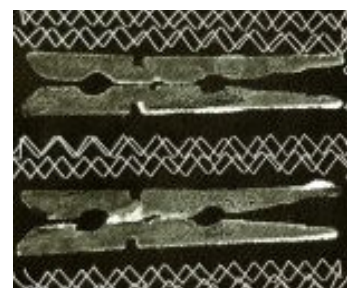
As I have mentioned before this will be combined with a new week on handmade books where we will look at one or two different book structures every day I have added a few more images of Japanese stab bound books to the [gallery](#). As many of you know, I love all things Japanese and have really enjoyed using traditional origami papers to make these books. I will also be teaching the Japanese stab bound books and the opened spined books at Enfield Embroiderers Guild on Saturday 30th May 2015. If anyone is interested in coming I know they are open to visitors, so do get in touch.



As a follow up to the summer school, we all decided to do a round robin postcard stitch, something I have wanted to start for ages. Each person will embroider the background of a postcard, based on the beach and then post it on to the next person. There are 8 of us taking part and we have given ourselves about two weeks to make our contribution before passing it on again. I have just received my first background to work on from Margaret Wilmore (left) I am really looking forward to adding my stitching, I just hope I

can do it justice. The final postcards will all be finished by Christmas and I will send some pictures then I hope, until then we are keeping the work as a surprise!

For those interested in the Distance Learning Machine Embroidery, Pamala Page has completed two units, [Unit Three](#) 'Fabricland' is shown on the left and has been made around the themes of working with surfaces and textures, layering and bonding and [Unit Four](#), soluble fabrics, edges, cords and tassels. Beth Irvine has finished [Unit One](#), right, which is all about markmaking, pattern repeat, collage and getting to grips with the machine, I love these prints made with clothes pegs.



One other new project I have started this month is for Ashbury, a village in South Oxfordshire, which has gained funding for an art project through the 'Percent for Art' scheme, which encourages developers of large new building schemes to make a contribution to a local arts project.

The village has decided to make a textile map, showing roads, houses, local organisations and village traditions, together with the flora and fauna in the area. The initial design for the map was drawn up by Stuart Roper a local artist and we are now translating these photographs into a 5'x5' square map. We are looking for as many local people as possible to take part, using whatever textile technique they feel most comfortable with. We will be working in quilting, knitting, appliqué, machine and hand embroidery, cross stitch and tapestry, to name but a few!



The map was a great excuse to go up to the Festival of Quilts last month to buy the materials, and £350 later we came back with our stash of fabrics, paints and threads. I will let you know how these transform into the, 107, at the last count, images on the map! I did get to see just a few of the fabulous quilts on display but these have been photographed and discussed on in so many newsletters that I will not mention them again here. I must apologise to everyone that I saw for the fact that I didn't stop and chat for long, there really was a big shop going on!

For a long time I have wanted to visit [Dulwich Picture Gallery](#), the world's first purpose built public art gallery which opened in 1817. As it is just outside central London it is not so easy for me to get there, but I had to drive in a couple of weeks ago so it was a good excuse to visit. The gallery houses over 600 old masters in the permanent collection including works by Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Canaletto, Rubens and Veronese, but I visited primarily to see the exhibition "Art and Life: Ben Nicholson, Winifred Nicholson, Christopher Wood, Alfred Wallis, William Staite Murray, 1920 – 1931" as there was a section on the Cornish paintings and how each of the trained artists responded to meeting Alfred Wallis, the local fisherman turned artist who painted on whatever materials he could lay his hands on.

Although this was a great exhibition, the painting that stood out most for me was in the permanent collection and was "Woman at the Clavichord" (right) painted by Gerrit Dou in 1665. My first impression when I saw it was that it was a Vermeer, but although the subject is the same, on a closer look, the style and composition, undoubtedly the inspiration for Vermeer's "A Young Woman Seated at a Virginal" 1670, is quite different.

Dou, initially was taught by his master Rembrandt but took the idea of reproducing detail to new heights. Every stitch in the hanging rug can be seen, the veins in the leaves and even the nails in the floorboards. In Dou's painting, the viewer looks into a room filled with daylight reflecting on the soft textures of vine leaves, fabrics and wooden furniture. Many symbols are included to remind us that music is the food of love – by the window is a vase of flowers, on the table a glass of wine, a recorder and sheet music, and a base viola with its graceful curves akin to the shape of a woman's body, is waiting to be picked up. The seated woman is waiting expectantly for her tutor or perhaps her lover to come and join her in a duet.



Vermeer's room is emptier, it is evening and the window is dark. The textures are hard, a tiled floor and marble table. The woman has glanced away from her music which stands on the virginal as if interrupted from her private practice. Her hands are hidden, unlike the hands in the Dou image which delicately touch the fingerboard. Again the viola da gamba is seen in the foreground but in the background Vermeer has included a painting within a painting, Dirck Baburen's image of a prostitute playing a lute, and the procuress demanding payment from a prospective customer. Love in this painting is a contrast of the pure and harmonious with the more mercenary

aspects of sexual relationships.

I am not sure how I came across the book 'Vermeer's Hat', but in between reading Russian history in preparation for my trip I did manage this and it is great!

Taking five of Vermeer's paintings as starting points and the objects in them, from hats, to silver and porcelain, Timothy Brook explores world trade in the seventeenth century, it is well worth the read if you are interested in world history during this period.

On the subject of books, I was also 'persuaded' to buy a beautiful book on the Cornish coastline by one of the ladies at the Summer School it is called 'Sea and Shore Cornwall' and as these are both ones that may escape your notice I have decided to put together a list of favourite books on design, art, exhibitions, history, biographies as well as some paper and textiles. I have finally managed to add them to the [website](#) with links to their Amazon page. This has meant a bit of a reorganisation, but if you want to have a look, this is the beginning of a new page! If you have any suggestions to make, then I can always be persuaded to buy a book and will add to the list!

Finally, I must just briefly mention another exhibition I have been to this month and that is [Making Colour](#), at the National Gallery. There is a lot in the exhibition that anyone who has done an art course will be familiar with, but of course they have access to the best examples of how colour has been used through the ages in different paintings, how greens have been mixed, the development of blue from the precious lapis lazuli to Prussian and cobalt blues. At the end of the exhibition is a film which demonstrates how different lights, for instance tungsten or fluorescent light affects the way we see colour. There is also the opportunity to take part in an interactive survey on which lights you prefer. For anyone who doesn't get to the exhibition, check out the fantastic [Journey Through Colour](#) educational resource, a great starting point for investigating how colours have developed and how they work together.

Now, I must get back to finishing my book on Peter the Great, so till next time ...

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne', with a stylized, cursive script.