



## August Newsletter 2016

Dear All,

Am now officially back from the great adventure! New Zealand via Tokyo and back through San Francisco, I circumnavigated the globe in 29 days!

It was just a 2 day stopover in Tokyo, the only flights available meant that the visit was far too short, but this was somewhere I had always dreamed of. It was very exciting to encounter a completely different culture and although becoming more and more Westernised I still saw glimpses of the old traditions and culture.

I spent most of the time in the region of the ancient Sensō-ji buddhist temple and the adjoining Shinto and Asakusa shrines and gardens. The smell of incense was overpowering and combined with the heat and humidity made for a heady atmosphere. As well as the religious buildings there were many small stalls selling traditional gifts for tourists, including fabulous washi papers, street food and restaurants and an o-mikuji stall where you are able to consult the oracle to divine answers to your life questions by shaking labelled sticks from a metal containers. Each stick is numbered and these numbers correspond to one of 100 possible drawers each containing a strip of paper with an answer on.

I was also able to visit [The Amuse Museum](#) (you will need to switch to the English version if you follow the link) which houses a huge collection of boro style kimono. Originally from the North of Japan and made for warmth these kimono have been made from small pieces of fabric, and mended and patched often for generations with hemp or cotton materials. The word derives from the Japanese boroboro meaning tattered or repaired and there are also many modern examples of the boro concept on display and it was the perfect end to my short visit.



The following day I arrived in Auckland to give my talk “Diamond Stitches” the fusion of science and textiles, community and outreach projects and my residency at the UK's

synchrotron facility at ANZEG the biennial conference of the Association of New Zealand's Embroiderers' Guilds.



I was also running a couple of two day workshops during the conference, one was to design and make a panel based on the work of Klimt incorporating a mixture of metallic materials, the second was to make a [Miniature Kimono](#), shown here is one I made from shirt fabrics which I printed and patched together and stitched with sashiko. Meaning "little stabs" in Japanese it is a simple running stitch which is used in Japan to both decorate and reinforce fabric.

As a result of this workshop, I was told about the fantastic 'Asia Gallery' which sold Japanese antiques and kimono from old Kyoto. Needless to say, I spent large amounts of money on an antique Japanese book, an intricately cut leaf stencil mounted on a grid made from human hair, name seals made from bone and old kimono fabrics. I can't believe I left Tokyo with nothing like this and bought so much in Auckland that it had to be posted home!

The official post conference tour of "Illuminated Letters" (another two day workshop) was given 5 times in all. I began in Auckland where we spent the first day creating embossed letters out of used tomato puree tubes, designing and painting backgrounds with bronzing powders and fabric paints and on the second we stitched, by machine and hand, with metallic threads, beads and tiny sequins.

Next, I flew to Napier, located in the wine region of Hawkes Bay where I was lucky enough to have a day off and took a 2 hour walking tour of the city which was devastated in 1931 by an earthquake and was rebuilt in the Art Deco and Spanish Mission styles of architecture. Every year the town holds an Art Deco weekend where everyone dresses up in 1930's costume to celebrate!

From Napier I travelled to Wellington, the capital and then on to the South island and Dunedin where I stayed with a very talented embroiderer and tutor Gaynor Chronican and her husband David who took me on what must have been one of the highlights of my trip, seeing 43 of the smallest penguins in the world, the Little Blue, only 30cms tall and weighing less than 1kg. Gaynor was kind enough to give me one of her heart broach designs to make – here it is, not made into a broach but on the front of my new needlecase.





My final stop was Christchurch and I was lucky enough to be shown around by Leureen Pederson and her husband Eric whose home had been badly affected by the 2011 earthquake. I had not expected that there would still be as much devastation in the city, large areas where buildings once stood remain unbuilt. The Cathedral is still in ruins while the authorities decide its future, but due to the amazing ingenuity and resourcefulness of “disaster” architect Shigeru Ban who worked on the project on a pro bono basis, a temporary Cathedral was erected utilising huge cardboard tubes. This was completed in 2013 and will remain as the church for the St. John parish when the future for a permanent Cathedral building is resolved.

I didn't have much time to visit any galleries during my trip although I did have a quick visit to the Christchurch Art Gallery and saw the impressive still life photography of [Fiona Pardington](#) in an exhibition “A Beautiful Hesitation”. I would love to see more of her work, there was no weight

available in my luggage for the catalogue so I will just have to keep my fingers crossed that her work comes to the UK at some point.

The most moving piece of art had to be a spontaneous response to the earthquake by the people of Christchurch. There have been many artworks using the iconography of empty chairs to memorialise the dead, and 185 Empty Chairs is a memorial to the 185 people who lost their lives in the 2011 earthquake, each chair painted white and representing a different life from a child's high chair, a wheelchair and an office chair.



From New Zealand I travelled to San Francisco for three days on the way home. It was lovely to catch some sun after the winter of the Southern Hemisphere and I took the tourist hop on hop off bus to see the highlights of the city including the amazing Golden Gate Bridge.

In particular I was interested to see some of the locations from Alfred Hitchcock's film *Vertigo* and especially the [Mission Dolores](#) founded in 1776 and more formally known as Misión San Francisco de Asís after St Francis of Assisi. The mission is the oldest building still standing in the city and I certainly wasn't disappointed, there was a Spanish service just beginning when I arrived and I sat quietly at the back listening to the wonderful organ music and once more taking in the scent of the incense, this time in a Catholic mission house. Behind the church is the old graveyard used as the location for

the graveyard scenes in Vertigo where Madeline visits the grave of Carlotta Valdez. A beautiful, tranquil location amidst the hustle of this highly populated Californian city.



My last visit, was to the <https://www.sfmoma.org/> where there were a couple of things that caught my eye, firstly the [Alexander Calder Motion Lab](#) where many of the mobiles Calder made from the 1930's-1960s, were shown. Calder first introduced movement into art pieces in what we now refer to as “mobiles”, beautifully balanced suspended shapes. Another floor was showing an installation of the conceptual artist Sol LeWitt's wall drawings. LeWitt believed that an idea could be a work of art with as much validity as any painting or sculpture and defined lists of instructions for walls to be painted in a series of grids. At each location where the art is made it expands and contracts to fit the different sizes of the walls giving very different effects. At the end of the exhibition, these walls will be painted over, I wonder how this can be seen in relation to the value of other “murals” created today?

So my round the world trip ended, I made many new friends, had some amazing experiences and returned utterly happy but exhausted. Many thanks to everyone I met who made the whole experience so enjoyable. There are plenty of photos on my [facebook](#) page for anyone wanting to see images of the pieces on all the workshops and no doubt some completed pieces will be added soon.

Back at work now in the UK and there are still some places available on the [Natural Dyeing](#) residential course in Somerset. This is a new venue for me, set in the beautiful countryside home of Harriet Sandys and her husband Bryan. You will not only enjoy 3 full days of dyeing and discharging with indigo and other natural materials but also see [Harriet's](#) wonderful collection of materials, bags, clothes and jewellery put together while working in Pakistan and Afghanistan where she worked for Unesco setting up training classes in silk weaving and dyeing and assisting craftsmen reestablish their businesses after being displaced by the many conflicts in the region. She has many items for sale so do bring your purse!



The beautiful pieces shown here are unfortunately not mine, but dyed last year on the Oxford Summer School Plus course (see below) by Julia Oxlade.

The cost of the workshop is £150 for the three days, this includes refreshments throughout the day, a light lunch and your dyes. You will need to bring a range of natural fabrics to dye, a full list of materials to bring will be available on booking. If you require accommodation, there are still rooms at the venue and many local Bed and Breakfasts. A list of these properties can be supplied or if you wish us to arrange your accommodation, the cost of the three day course will be £250.

I will be doing something similar over two days at Oxford Summer School Plus in November and if you only have a day to spare, I am teaching Indigo dyeing at [Islington Arts Factory](#) on 10<sup>th</sup> September. Do email [info@annegriffiths.com](mailto:info@annegriffiths.com) to book places.



The list of other courses I am teaching seems to be expanding and there is probably not enough space here to document them all, so do visit my webpage for full details, in brief I will be teaching a series of **Sketchbook Workshops** at [Shaw House](#) in West Berkshire, **Machine Embroidery** at different levels in the [National Needlework Archive](#) and Ardington Arts Centre, **Transforming Textiles** at [Ardington Arts Centre](#) and **Hand Embroidery** at the [Vale & Downland Museum](#) in Wantage.

Now to carry on with all the other projects that has been mounting up while I have been away, until next newsletter ...

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.