

JERWOOD APPLIED ARTS PRIZE 2002 TEXTILES

MAXINE BRISTOW
ROWENA DRING
SHELLY GOLDSMITH
SHIZUKO KIMURA
LAUREN MORIARTY
CLIO PADOVANI
FREDDIE ROBINS
SARAH TAYLOR



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This, the second Jerwood Applied Arts Prize for Textiles, comes at a time when textiles are regularly seen to be the interface between science/art/technology/fashion/architecture/design. An essay of response could be considered to be a verbal gallery constructed by the writer, to house the work, or a placing of elements in order – a 'tidying of a room.' The term textile covers such a multiplicity of concerns that finding the 'right place' reflects both diversity and correspondence.

Chair of the judging panel for the Jerwood Applied Arts Prize 2002, Pamela Johnson, is quoted as saying 'The final group of artists selected, work across a broad range of techniques and demonstrate an enormous amount of skill and an intelligent take on traditional processes.' This statement becomes not just affirmative but radical when placed in the context of the battles that have been fought, lost and won, over the positioning of textiles. The architect Adolf Loos described the initiating stages of architectural design as based in woven structure which become integrated into the building, carrying an 'evocative' intention of comfort. The textile practitioner of say, 40 years ago, would have placed their work alongside this objective. Since that time textiles have been the site for 'creating newness' through debate about the language of description and the language of value in contemporary art and craft theory and practice. Contemporary textile works have become much closer to Loos' definition of art, being 'revolutionary in intention – in a word, provocative.'¹

Emerging political awareness, argument about the importance/non-importance of craft skills, historical and cultural relevance these are all themes which have become familiar through their examination in cloth, textiles and textile related techniques, including the use and understanding of textiles that may contain, but are not confined to, function. The technologies and materials that revolutionised fashion textiles over the last three decades have also been absorbed into individual studio practice, and throughout the 1990s there were a series of exhibitionsⁱⁱ which served as signposts for the development of ideas. The rigorous application of theory gained through some of the tough intellectual drives of the 80s and 90s have produced a body of argument which underpins much of the work in the present

selection of short-listed artists in this exhibition. The justification of the medium is no longer necessary; the high levels of skill, the knowledge of techniques and materials are all central to the realisation of the work and are implicit. Although the work of the short-listed artists is very different in outcome, the link is that, for each, the textile nature of the work is 'given' and this is also true for many who are involved with textiles. In a recent lecture about her workⁱⁱⁱ, American artist Lia Cook said 'Issues of cloth no longer have to be set apart but have become a natural part of my vocabulary.'

The works in this exhibition provide positive examples that the 'use of textiles is becoming increasingly sophisticated, both visually and technologically, respecting tradition, craftsmanship and innovation in terms of performance.'^{iv} The understanding of processes gives an ease of approach to the factors surrounding the work. There is a clarity of intention with which these textile practitioners have approached the diversity of making within the conceptual processes which underpin their work. It is that self-conscious relationship each has with textile history and tradition which enables them to place their work within their particular contemporary standpoint.

The short-listed artists all demonstrate a confident movement back and forth within an historical perspective allied to secure knowledge, understanding and practice of traditional and innovative techniques. Sarah Taylor uses the vocabularies of technology and cloth to create works of light and transparency which redefine the surrounding architectural space. Taylor's woven textiles are a revolutionary combination of substance and illusion, which, as they change colour, alter our perception of space and structure. These changes continue with or without an audience and appear to be in dialogue with the ambient space and the structure of the building. In her latest work, the area between the work and its audience is by no means a neutral or an independent entity. The reactive fibres and sensors within the work cause the viewer to move from observer to participant, an interaction which creates rhythms of sound and light. As such, we can engage, playfully, with the work and with the (absent) artist in determining a range of possible outcomes.

Every material employed in the 'dressing' of architecture possesses its own language of form^v. While Sarah Taylor's work is essentially that of architectural intervention, Maxine Bristow draws attention to architectural detail through the use of texture. Bristow conducts a continuing discourse within a minimalist aesthetic, the works generating a sense of energy contained within a quiet stillness. Most recently her concerns have been with those details within the built environment that are essential to the practical usage of the space but are, in fact, overlooked. This 'invisibility' can occur through familiarity of use, as with door handles, light switches and guard rails, or through concealment within the fabric of the building, as with pipes and conduits. These references find their parallel in the equally subtle nuances of the buttonholes in her *Bag* works. It is probable that needlepoint is the textile technique most usually associated with non-professional activity, and the sheer scale of her needlepoint installations, which she describes as 'so simple yet so complex,' have resulted in Bristow developing a working relationship with non-professionals. This in turn forms another level of integration between tradition and innovation.

Together, needlepoint and knitting are the most familiar textile activities within the domestic environment. Both Maxine Bristow and Freddie Robbins are highly subversive in their use of this intimacy. Robbins is looking at the extreme edges of experience through her expressed commitment to knitting. Her interest in skin, taxidermy, mummies and what she calls 'the half-state of humour' – that is, the edge of humour – all inform her work. Her childhood visit to Mr. Potter's Museum of Curios became an early introduction to this world poised somewhere between reality and illusion, between life and death. Robbins' knitted, life-size figures have resonances of the lost shadow of Peter Pan and there is a point at which these 'skins', particularly 'St. Sebastian', become abandoned skins. All these garments, which describe the 'unnatural', have an inherent authority derived from the actual functioning garments to which they are related. The disturbing connotations implied by their inappropriateness are contradicted by the friendliness of the woollen material and the familiarity of the knitted structure.

Much contemporary discourse about textiles has been concerned with the inherent narrative characteristics of cloth, tapestry being the most overt demonstration of this. Two of the short-listed artists have based their work in the practice and understanding of tapestry. From a central, elemental, point – water, Shelly Goldsmith moves across, between and through a breadth of research in medical, religious and environmental iconography. This research is then transposed and re-formed through complex and sophisticated construction and deconstruction. She offers us sensations of the unpredictable, underlying forces of nature, creating an awareness of the way in which water facilitates ripeness, to the point of fullness and bursting. Her three-dimensional, pearshaped tapestries act as a metaphor for pregnancy, making us conscious of the physicality of the body, not as object but as material weight in movement^{vi}. The display of the work within the hard metal vitrine reflects the divorcing of life from the nurturing microcosm of the womb. Goldsmith's work presents us with various visual challenges: between textures – metal and cloth, between the fragility of the child's dress and images of destruction, and between the lightness of the woven mono-filament works and the heaviness of the woven pear structures; in one we have the sense of water flowing through and in the other the water held within. Clio Padovani's textile understanding, derived from both her own work as a tapestry weaver and her research into historical textiles, is the foundation for her current practice. Aesthetic distance, denoted by the way we 'look', can be compounded by video through our familiarity with the medium. Padovani counters this by employing a particular digital vocabulary and a depth of reference which leads the viewer to a wholly visual, rather than purely optical, experience. Layering and reweaving historical and contemporary imagery references the tapestry making process, while the juxtaposition of textile detail and sensory organs (mouths, eyes) creates a disturbing site for imaginative experience. Padovani's exposition of public order/private chaos, the hidden/revealed, for which the front and back of woven tapestry have provided such an eloquent metaphor, is reflected in the visible mix of wires emerging from behind the 'clean' monitor screen.

The traditional object of life room study is to determine how to render the human form through anatomical understanding. Within this methodology there is much that references the pinning down of the specimen, and in her depiction of the figure Shizuko Kimura uses the direct application of needle and thread to hand-made paper or cotton muslin. Through the unitary system of small drawings taken from the figure, Kimura slowly builds a delicate panorama of the body in movement or repose. There is a lightness about the movements of the figure, as if the viewer is glimpsing a moment in time. This is reinforced by the semi-transparent muslin which also makes us aware of the infrastructure of lines behind the surface, lending it a three-dimensional sensation. There is much in her work that recalls the detached observer, but the spontaneity of the line suggests intimacy, which in turn creates an aura of complicity between the artist's intention and the observer's view.

Another kind of representational language, previously associated with a different art form, is employed by Rowena Dring. In her work there is a clear referencing of stylistic techniques that have grown out of 1960s screen-printing and familiarity with digitalised graphics packages. Dring's work has a strong sense of 'the construction of a notion of English landscape.'^{vii} Within these sewn constructions her use of place as evocation of memory is echoed by the traditional technique of appliqué. Appliqué is essentially a collage technique allowing Dring to develop the significance of flat colour suggesting space and the location of memory, while the sewn edge gives indications of vitality and differing implications of imagery. The narrative carried within the work is both interior: memory, and exterior: landscape.

The surety of touch with which this selection of Jerwood artists has embraced the diversity of textile techniques and materials is apparent in the work of Lauren Moriarty. Working with EVA rubber foam, a type of Neoprene, Moriarty has developed a series of geometric structures that have application in a variety of forms. Alone of the short-listed artists, her work has clear, product outcomes. Moriarty is looking to develop a batch production system which will enable the functional aspects of her work to be fully realised. The work reflects the forefront in the use of new materials

and technology but, in common with all these Jerwood exhibitors, Moriarty is drawing on her textile inheritance. Repeat patterning has been one of the traditional fundamentals of cloth – in its structure and its surface decoration. Moriarty is using this basic precept to create innovative fabrics which can be gallery or industrially based.

The critic Tom Lubbock wrote recently 'Cloth is the universal free element. It doesn't have to explain itself. It performs.'^{viii} The very nature of cloth/textile will ensure that 'textiles' will continue to be the site for discussion and argument and, as these artists demonstrate, there is an extant body of work which is revelatory in its diversity of approach and outcome. The 'performance' of cloth is indicative of its autonomy and the terms of reference are those determined by the maker. The Jerwood Applied Arts Prize 2002: Textiles is a true celebration of the genuinely innovative work produced by those who have emerged from a textile background, with all the commensurate skill and understanding which that implies.

Lesley Millar
August 2002
Lesley Millar is currently Daiwa/AHRB Research Fellow in Contemporary Anglo-Japanese Textiles at The Surrey Institute of Art and Design University College.

i Harry Francis Mallgrave 'Adolf Loos. Ornament and Sentimentality' Plumbing. Sounding Modern Architecture. Ed. Lahiji & Friedman pp 129-130. Princeton Architectural Press 1997

ii For example 'Distant Lives/Shared Voices' 1992, '2010: Textiles and New Technology' 1994, 'Under Construction: exploring process in contemporary textiles' 1996, 'Revelation: textile artists addressing issues' 1996, 'Art Textiles' 1996, 'Flexible 2' 1997, 'Textures of Memory: the poetics of cloth' 1999

iii Lia Cook 'Zeroing in on touch: Drapery, skin and the body', Drapery in visual culture, Conference, National Gallery, London 30 & 31/8/02

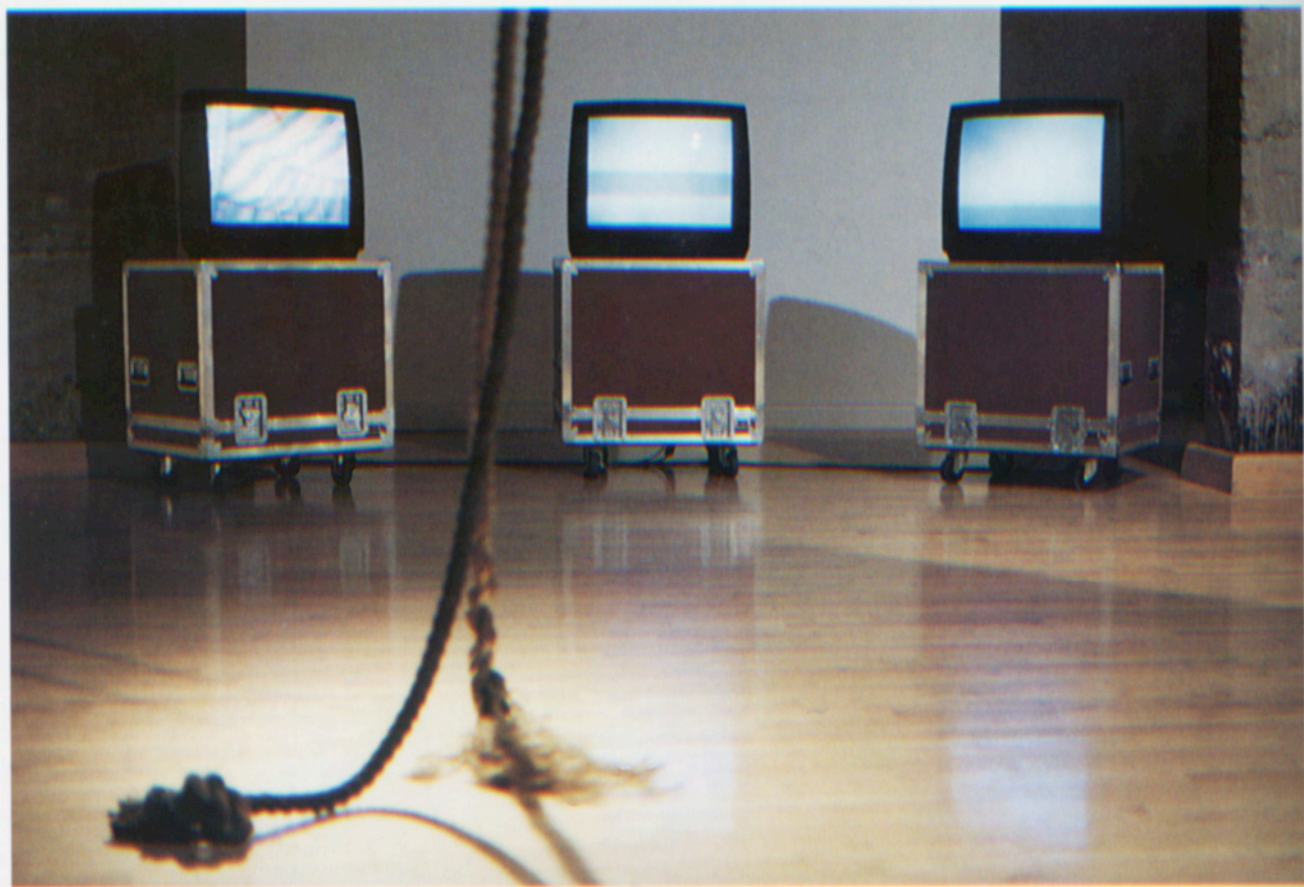
iv Louise Wilson, Director Womenswear Donna Karan New York 'The importance of textiles to Donna Karan, New York' Textiles An Afterthought? Loughborough University School of Art & Design 2000 p.35

v Harry Francis Mallgrave 'Adolf Loos. Ornament and Sentimentality' Plumbing. Sounding Modern Architecture. Ed. Lahiji & Friedman p. 129. Princeton Architectural Press 1997

vi Iris Young 'Pregnant Embodiment' Body and Flesh Ed. Welton p.275. Blackwell 1998

vii Art Textiles 2 catalogue p. 15. Bury St. Edmunds Art Gallery 2000

viii Tom Lubbock 'The secret life of cloth'. Independent 18/6/02



(above) *Ligature*, 2001
(left) *Unbound Episodes*, 2002



CLIO PADOVANI

Based in Hampshire
Born 1963 Italy

EDUCATION

1989 Royal College of Art,
MA Tapestry

1987 Edinburgh College of Art
BA First Class Hons

**SELECTED
EXHIBITIONS**

2001 Tissus Urbains,
Mal, Montreal, Canada.
arttextiles 2,

Bury St. Edmunds Art Gallery,
Bury St. Edmunds and tour.

2000 Closure,
Winchester Gallery.
Core: Contemporary
Regional Textiles,
Millais Gallery, Southampton.

**MAJOR GRANTS /
AWARDS / PRIZES**

2002 Arts and Humanities
Research Board, Small Award

2001 Southern Arts,
Individual Development
Award, British
Council, Canada.

**NOTABLE COMMISSIONS
AND COLLECTIONS**

2000 Crafts Council, Centre
D'exposition Expression,
Montreal, Canada.

**TEACHING /
LECTURING POSTS**

1995-present

Winchester School of Art,
University of Southampton,
Lecturer



CLIO PAD OVA NI