

Amanda Glendenning won 3rd prize in the Hand & Lock 2020 textile open. This interview was done as part of the award.

H&L: WHAT WAS YOUR TRAINING?

AG: Foundation course at Wakefield College, BA Hons Embroidery at Manchester Poly; City and Guilds in Traditional Upholstery

H&L: CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR PRACTICE?

AG: I start with the kernel of an idea or image that has somehow risen to the surface.

From there I begin turning the idea around in my mind, amassing notes and possible images using sketches and photographs.

From that research I form an image of what I want to achieve; I then decide on the scale of the piece and whether it will be 2 or 3 dimensional.

Then I make centimetre scale patterns or templates - toiles on a mannequin in the case of costumes - until I'm satisfied that every element will fit as I envisage it and can be stitched together smoothly.

Next I gather together fabrics either from what I've collected over the years, or new pieces, of the right weight, colour and texture etc.

Then I sample the techniques and stitches I've decided on.

Usually I will start the piece beginning with the element I'm most sure of, say a piece of canvas work that will be applied to a background fabric.

If it's a series, like the Star Carr portraits, I work on them all simultaneously, building up layers on each one before I move on to the next stage.

My ideas change as the work progresses and I always add extra or different elements despite how meticulous the research was. It's very fluid, some things work straight away and others don't and I have to wrestle and alter them until they do work.

It's very laborious as everything is stitched by hand and often there are multiples, like buttons or tassels, or repeat motifs.

I just try to keep going but I usually have other elements of the piece to work on if I need a change, then come back to whatever is either mind-blowingly repetitive, or not working, with a fresh eye.

Finally all the separate elements are ready to be assembled and it's always a surprise!

And usually euphoric.

H&L: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION AND IDEAS FROM?

AG: I read, I listen to music and look at a lot of images though I tend not to look at other textile artists' work.

Sometimes a dream or an image from childhood will inspire me; I was a voracious reader even as a child and I think formative experiences of art or literature influence creativity in adult life. Sometimes a piece of music like the ballad of The Cruel Sister, which I first heard of in a talk by Marina Warner.

Always, myth, folklore, landscape, historic textiles and embroidery, women's work, history and prehistory.

H&L: WHAT ARE THE CONSTANT THEMES IN YOUR WORK?

AG: Well, see above, but I would also include transformation & metamorphosis in nature - plants, humans and animals.

Traditional textiles, techniques and stitches as used by women in the past in their everyday lives and the passing on of these.

Portraiture and memorial.

H&L: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE FABRICS, TECHNIQUES AND STITCHES?

AG: I've got a store of fabrics I've collected over the years or bought from vintage sales and flea markets.

I love that extra facet of use and memory, and of course I try to use and recycle every scrap.

I prefer natural fibres- silk, linen, cotton and wool.

If I have to buy new I'm lucky to live near Totnes which has a superb fabric shop and also threads and other supplies.

My favourite techniques & stitches are canvas work, black work, appliqué and intricate surface stitches such as plaited braid stitch, detached buttonhole, trellis stitch, velvet stitch etc, but I use plain satin and herringbone stitches a lot as fillers.

I really love the amazing & precise Japanese embroidery techniques.

H&L: WHICH ARTISTS, PAST AND PRESENT, ARE YOU INSPIRED BY?

AG: Leonardo da Vinci, Paula Rego, Leonora Carrington, Cathy de Monchaux, Vivienne Westwood, William Blake, Arthur Rackham, Dan Hillier, Alexander McQueen, George Shaw, Richard Dadd to name a few.

Writers Susan Cooper and Alan Garner; prehistoric cave painters and rock carvers; traditional female embroiderers who wore their work every day.

H&L: WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE PEOPLE TO TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR WORK?

AG: A luscious and theatrical combination of colour and story.

H&L: WHAT ARE YOUR AMBITIONS AND PLANS FOR FUTURE WORK?

AG: To finish the Tempest sequence and have it made into a book; to continue to make unique pieces of my choosing; to develop in drawing and technical skill; learn new techniques; go to The Florence Academy for their portrait painting course.

[Amanda Glendenning - Hand & Lock \(handembroidery.com\)](http://handembroidery.com)