

Art: Beware of Embroidery at Ealing's PM Gallery

By Martin Newman on Jan 19, 10 11:42 PM in Art



Until February 27

Here's a dazzlingly original exhibition that takes its cue from a traditional, many would say, fusty art form.

If you like arts and craft, folk art or naivism then get along to see Beware of Embroidery at Ealing's PM Gallery. If you don't then go to see this anyway - it will blow your darned socks off.

The show by contemporary artists aims to overturn preconceived ideas about the meaning and impact of embroidery, and it does so brilliantly.

The works are stunning, thought provoking and original.

Take Dutch artist Tilleke Schwarz's 1993 piece, below, from which the exhibition takes its name.



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<http://blogs.mirror.co.uk/the-ticket/2010/01/art-beware-of-embroidery-at-ea.html>

A classic example of folk art, an assemblage of commonplace but disparate images - the disembodied head, a figure hewn in two, a bottle of brown sauce. And across it words, writing, outlined hands. All of which is conveyed in a rambling, child-like needlepoint.

A cacophony of ideas, works such as Purr Chase (2008), Count Your Blessings (2007) and Rites (1999) are beautiful in their muddled detail and contrived mundanity.

Then there is Kate Keara Pelen, with her richly coloured, gorgeous and precisely sewn patterns.

And while beautiful, the exhibition is also confronting.

Laura Splan's series of intricate snowflake (for want of a better term) doilies, each depicting a deadly or debilitating viral strain - Influenza, Sars, HIV, Herpes and Hepadna, from which Hepatitis evolved. Alongside these her 2008 work Fan (Anatomy of the Gaze), is made by 'machine embroidery with thread on cosmetic facial peel'.

Tamar Stone's corsets, commenting on ideas of female perfection, as in Hints to a Fashionable Lady (2006-07) which uses vintage underwear catalogue models printed on fabric and embroidered over. Her works are inspired in part by her own experience with spinal curvature, but they are also deeply feminist tracts on female body-image and esteem.

In the American artist's Carver-esque sounding It's Where I am Now (2006-07), an embroidered doll's bed, she comments on solitude and a woman's need for her own space.

And then there is London-based artist Louise Riley. Her work Somewhere Over the Rainbow, top, creates an ethereal image that almost floats over the material it is sewn on to. Her ability to convey musculature, shading and expression is remarkable and something to be seen.

This incredible collection of artists don't just explore the possibilities of their craft they do their utmost to redefine it and elevate it to the highest pedestal of art.

This one's a big 'Wow!'

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