



telopea

Editor : Irene Manion

Issue 7, March 2023



EDITOR'S NOTES

This seventh edition of *Telopea* contains stories by three feature artists who are members or former members of CraftNSW. Their unique creations reflect long term commitment to exploring their chosen media.

A main focus in the long-standing career of Jude Skeers, has been a unique field of practice, circular knitting, which he has taken it to a new level. His installations are well known and he has explored this medium in unexpected, creative ways, at times revealing fun and humour.

Pam de Groot is a remarkable talent who has managed to combine skills in two diverse media, felting and fine art jewelry. Excelling in both, Pam brings together her diverse materials in unexpected and cutting-edge pieces.

Vera Alexanderova has a distinctive brand. Her exciting practice, pushes her into the field of contemporary hand-made fashion and homeware design. I have always been in awe of her beautiful work and am pleased to be able to showcase some of her stunning pieces in this edition.

Finally, our international article carries on the textile thread that has woven its way through this edition. Like Pam de Groot, Zena Holloway seems to effortlessly combine a practice in two different media, that intersect and play off each other in extraordinary ways. Underwater photography led England based artist, Zena Holloway, into the world of biodesign and the creation of 'fabric' through organic growth of grass roots over specially designed and created wax forms.

There are links to her website and videos to watch.

Finally, as part of CraftNSW's series of exhibitions, the Brush Farm exhibition will be coming up in April. Coinciding with this is a free lecture entitled: *Art Nouveau: Ahead of the Curve*. Our ambassador, Claudia Chan Shaw will provide entertaining insights into the golden era of handicraft: the Art Nouveau period. The lecture is free, but you should let CraftNSW know you wish to attend via email to: galleries@artsandcraftsnsw.com.au.

Don't hesitate, email us today for this not-to-be-missed event.

Ed.

Cover Image:

Pam de Groot
Out of the Ashes, neckpiece, wet felted merino wool, sterling silver, bronze, wood.

"As the Blue Mountains survives fire and record rains in the last 18 months, so the pink flannel flowers emerge. Sightings are usually rare as they require first a bushfire, and then good rains in the spring. Their seeds can lie dormant for many years, emerging as a breath of hope and beauty after hardship" Pam de Groot

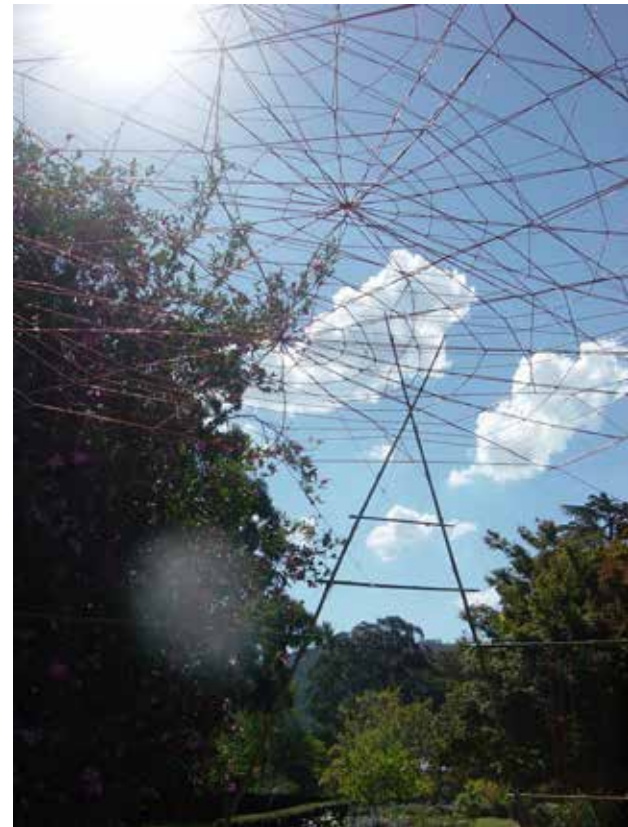
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JUDE SKEERS
Chronicle of the knitted web



Heidelberg School Picnic



Mittagong - Photo: Richard Allport



Silver Web, Launceston 1

JUDE SKEERS Chronicle of the knitted web

From the inspiration of Inga Hunter (1984), the installation of the first web in the Heidelberg School Picnic Exhibition (1985) to the 100 Webs in 100 days at the Tafta Inc. Geelong Fibre Forum (2022), this is the chronicle of the knitted web.

I was 10 when my mother taught me to knit. This was more than 40 years ago, before television arrived in our home in the New South Wales country town of Junee. Each winter I would sit with my family around the open fire, usually with the radio on, and knit jumpers.” Australian Yarn Art – Knitting Stories and Designs - June Alexander – 2002.

My obsession with knitting had begun. I knitted a wide variety of garments until I turned thirty. I then decided to design and knit works that could be hung on a wall. Knitting as an art form. How to knit a flat circle? was the assignment that I set myself in the late 1970's. For the next thirty years this undertaking and its resolution dominated my art knitting. The first framed wall hangings that I knitted, when I set out to turn my skills in garment knitting into creating knitted art pieces, were squares, octagons and dodecagons..... Knitting, framed in a circle was more stable. I calculated that I needed to start at the circumference and decrease at the rate of four stitches per round, After much trial and error, the formula was mastered. All my early medallions were knitted from the

outside to the centre. The most delicate creation of my medallion knitting came in 1985 when my first web was knitted. (Tech talk – My Medallion Story - Yarn magazine issue 27 – 2012).

“Around 1984 Jude Skeers met Inga Hunter and stayed with her at her home in Leura in the Blue Mountains in New South Wales, a popular habitat of the funnel-web spider. She was very familiar with these spiders, and during a walk along the escarpment she introduced Skeers to the ‘tree funnel web’ spiders with their beautiful webs”. (Textile Fibre Forum Vol 19, Issue 4, NO.60. 2000, ‘Jude Skeers Webmaster’ by Richard Allport)

The knitted web made its first appearance in an exhibition in 1985. This was ‘The Heidelberg School Picnic’: an exhibition of contemporary Australian cartoons, illustrations and humorous creations at the State Library of Victoria. My knitted sculptural trees and webs were part of the ‘humorous creations’. The exhibition toured regional Victorian Art Galleries and the Albury Regional Art Gallery.

From 1988 until the early 1990's web knitting and web exhibiting were not part of my knitting practice. In 1991 I became involved with the Textile Fibre Forum at Frensham School in Mittagong. In 1995 my involvement found me installing a large web in a tree on the front lawn. That was the first of the really big webs.

Web installations continued at Frensham School, Mittagong until the event moved to Kinross Wolaroi School, Orange where the Forum was held from 2005 until 2011. During the 25 years of installation



Woodford



Mt Coot-tha

Reflecting on 65 years of knitting and over 40 years of art knitting I wonder why circular knitting has been the single dominating feature of my work.

A question that I have recently asked myself is: When did an obsession turn into an addiction? "Few of us would experience a great void in our lives if we had neglected to pick up knitting needles for a day or two."

for TAFTA Forum I collaborated with bamboo artist, Peter Wojciechowski. Thanks to Richard Allport's article in Textile Fibre Forum, (Vol 19, Issue 4, NO.60. 2000), and my installations at Mittagong I was invited to work elsewhere as an installation artist. Webs have been installed in parks, gardens and buildings throughout Australia, including Ross River Festival Townsville (2001), Bothwell Spin-In (2002), Ararat (2002) and Launceston Regional Forum (2002, 2004, 2007). Warwick (2008, 2009, 2011), TAA - St Peters Lutheran College Brisbane (2011). The largest web, 5.5 metres in

diameter, was installed along the Ross River, Townsville.

In 2014 I was invited by artist Tricia Smout to install webs in the Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mt Coot-tha.

"It was a great privilege to be able to include webs made by Jude Skeers. Jude is an internationally-recognised 'knitter extraordinaire and 'web-master' who has installed webs in many locations throughout Australia. For this project he collaborated with Peter Wojciechowski, respected bamboo artist, to create some amazing sculptural installations." (<http://triciasmout.blogspot.com/2012/10/arachnid-artistry->

different-type-of.html)

In 2015 I was invited to entwine giant webs over the façade of the Woodford Academy in the Blue Mountains, facing the Great Western Highway. This was part of 'Wrapt at Woodford Academy'. <https://wraptidevent.wordpress.com/2015/08/27/jude-skeers/>

I have had two major web exhibitions *Expanding the Web* and *Something Nothing*.

Expanding the Web took place in 2013 at Barometer Gallery in Sydney's Paddington.

In '*Expanding the Web*' visual artist Jude Skeers investigates the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of the web form. His original innovative web was designed and constructed over 25 years ago. The simplicity of the design has allowed for webs to be installed in internal and external spaces, utilizing available structures. In this exhibition the artistry of the web is defined by the available space and by Jude's decision to use only black yarn. Several of the webs are knitted with black sequins embellishing the black yarn <http://barometer.net.au/exhibitions/expanding-the-web/>

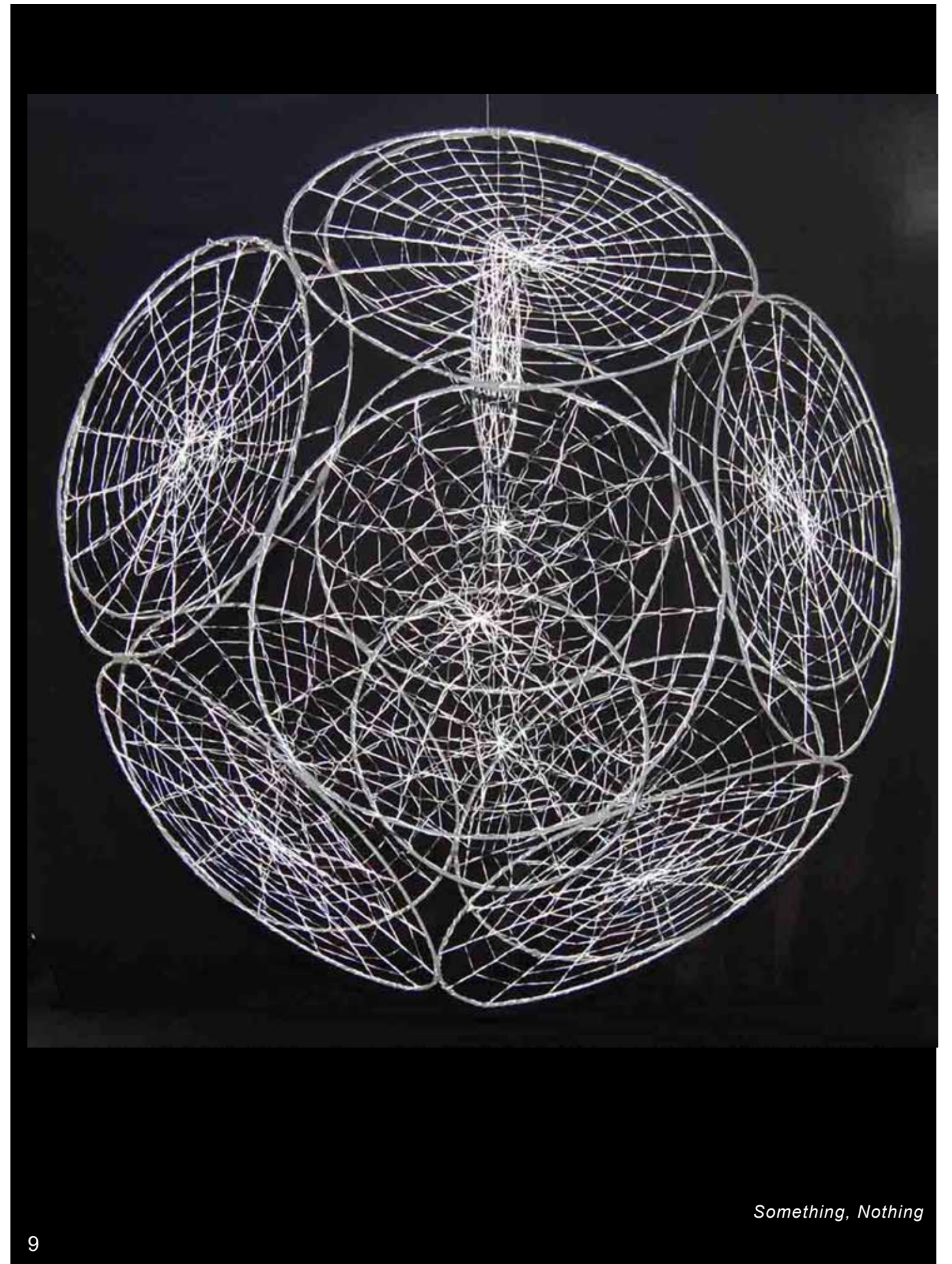
'*Something Nothing*' was held in 2017 at Braemar Gallery Springwood NSW. '*Something Nothing*' has given me the opportunity to experiment creating three dimensional shapes based on circles and webs perfectly fit the circular shape.

Light reflective yarns appear grey in ordinary light but reflect silver when viewed with a strong light source.....I love the way webs change depending on the line of sight of the viewer, and the play of light on the webs, be it a reflection or a shadow.' Down Under Textiles – Issue 29 – 2017

In 2021 I was invited to be the Artist in Residence at the 21st Anniversary of the Geelong Fibre Forum. I posted a web



Expanding the Web, Barometer



Something, Nothing



Geelong Fibre Forum

a day on Facebook for each of the 100 days leading up to the event. At one stage there were 80 webs installed in the grounds of Geelong Grammar School.

Reflecting on 65 years of knitting and over 40 years of art knitting I wonder why circular knitting has been the single dominating feature of my work.

A question that I have recently asked myself is: When did an obsession turn into an addiction? *“Few of us would experience a great void in our lives if we had neglected to pick up knitting needles for a day or two.”* That is precisely what I was quoted as saying in an article written in 1989. My

obsession had begun thirty years before when my mother taught me to knit. Another quote from the same article, *“The evolution of my knitting will continue – slow steps along a narrow path. It will remain my identity and my way of life.”* (Handmade – Spring/Summer 1989.)



when **STYLE** speaks louder than words

Claudia Chan Shaw



ART NOUVEAU : AHEAD OF THE CURVE
 Popular in Europe and the United States from 1890 - 1910, Art Nouveau was a decorative style that influenced architecture, fine art, illustration, advertising, jewellery, glass and furniture design. It was a new style for the coming century - a 'new art'. While a rather short lived movement, Art Nouveau has left a lasting impression on design and was a celebration of the hand made.

Join Claudia Chan Shaw for an intriguing look at this most elegant of design movements.

You are invited to a talk by our Ambassador, Claudia Chan Shaw
 “Art Nouveau - ahead of the curve”
 Claudia’s Powerpoint Talk”
 Forsters Hall adjacent to Brush Farm House
 19 Lawson St, Eastwood
 11 - 11.45 am, Saturday, 29th April 2023
 Admission free,
 RSVP

gallery@artsandcraftsnsw.com.au



Pam de Groot in her studio

Pam de Groot Successfully Challenging Conventions

Pam de Groot has been a long-time member of CraftNSW. Most craftspeople work to become proficient in a single medium, however, Pam has broken away from the norm and has established a reputation for herself in both felting and fine art jewellery, winning awards for design and excellence in both fields.

1. How has your practice evolved over time to incorporate two entirely different media? What factors have led to this outcome.

During Covid 2020 I allowed myself to spend time on a new discipline. Jewelry had always fascinated me, but I had always kept away from it knowing it would take time away from felting, my income source. As we were all stuck in our homes and the teaching tours had been cancelled I thought, "why not?" Looking online I found a woman saying that for \$250 you can buy a kit that will get you started on your jewellery making. I thought that was a small investment, I'll give it a go. I did not have a torch but I did have a kitchen Brûlée torch and for a little while that worked. With You Tube as my friend I learned more and more about jewellery. Once I got stuck, as the little brûlée torch was not hot enough, I invested in a proper torch and the \$250 budget began to blow out as needed more tools and of course more metal. It is not cheap venture.

My original main reason for wanting the silver work was to make closures and findings for my felt work. As I explored this medium I found I became more and more fascinated with the almost endless potential for expression in metal. Whereas the felt has a relatively short history as an art material (previously only used for utilitarian purposes), metal is one of the

oldest crafts and been used in so many ways over time. It is a challenge to find a new expression.

The studio has had to find space for this new craft. Luckily silver work does not take up as much space as other crafts. I have one end for the silver work and the other, larger end is for the felting. Dyeing occurs in the carport "Dyelab"

As my body ages, the wear and tear of years of hard, physical work are taking their toll. Working smaller with the jewellery will "future proof" my making for years to come. Both mediums will allow this. I had already started to work in smaller components with my felting. So while the final work may be large, it is comprised of smaller components and pieced together. This often also makes freight easier too.

2. Many of your fine art jewellery pieces contain a component of felting in them. Explain how your ideas evolve and how the two media interact in your design development.

I have begun to incorporate some of my felting into the silver work. I still feel I have so much to still learn in the silver jewellery sphere yet, so I am still very focussed on the fabrication of the metal in my learning.

When combining the felt with the metal I have an advantage over other media. I can wrap almost anything in felt. It can be colourful, textured, compressed, graduated, laminated and more.



Claw set felt Nautilus, Sterling silver, felt

After so many years working with wool I have a very deep understanding of how it will behave in certain circumstances. A design will usually start with a drawing and then I will begin with the metal, The felt component will always start larger, but if I have the metal component made I know the size I need, and can calculate the shrinkage accordingly. There is an added advantage to the felt. It is flexible and has some “forgiveness” in the making.

3. What does your practice look like in terms of dividing time between two very different and complex media. How do you manage this complexity.

It depends a bit on what comes first. If it is the metal, then I will start with that. I will draw the felt component to scale as I will have to get the shrinkage right, to make it in proportion. If the felt is the dominant component I will work the other way. Still with a drawing but the metal part won't be worked out till I have the felt made. Then I can see how the metal should go.

4. You also teach extensively. How does your teaching feed back into your practice and vice versa.

I teach online, domestically and internationally. This provides a wonderful opportunity to see new materials and try them out and also discover equipment not readily available in Australia.

I am always inspired by my students as they can take an idea or technique of mine and take it off in a new direction. In turn this can feed new ideas back to me. I love that in teaching you can provide that light bulb moment for students. Suddenly they are able to take their felting off in a new direction.

I am privileged to have also met nearly all my felting heroes. I love that we can keep in contact over the miles through the wonder of technology. I have made many friends through teaching and I'm always rejuvenated when I return from a trip. So many ideas to explore.

Visit Pam's website at: <https://pamdegroot.com/>



Thirsty Planet, felted form, Winner 2022 Seedstitch Contemporary Textile Award at the Australian Design Centre



Australian Flora, Felted neck ring



Forest Floor Sterling Silver ring



First You Must Burn Felted Sculptural Form
Photo Janet Tavener



Australian Flora, Felted brooch



Hard Wired Felted Sculptural Forms
Photo Janet Tavener

This sculpture is currently on display at
Hawkesbury Regional Gallery till the end of
April. see p29



'Nuno-felted jacket' by Vera Alexanderova
This garment can be worn both ways, as a longer coat or a shorter jacket. --

Feature artist

Vera Alexanderova

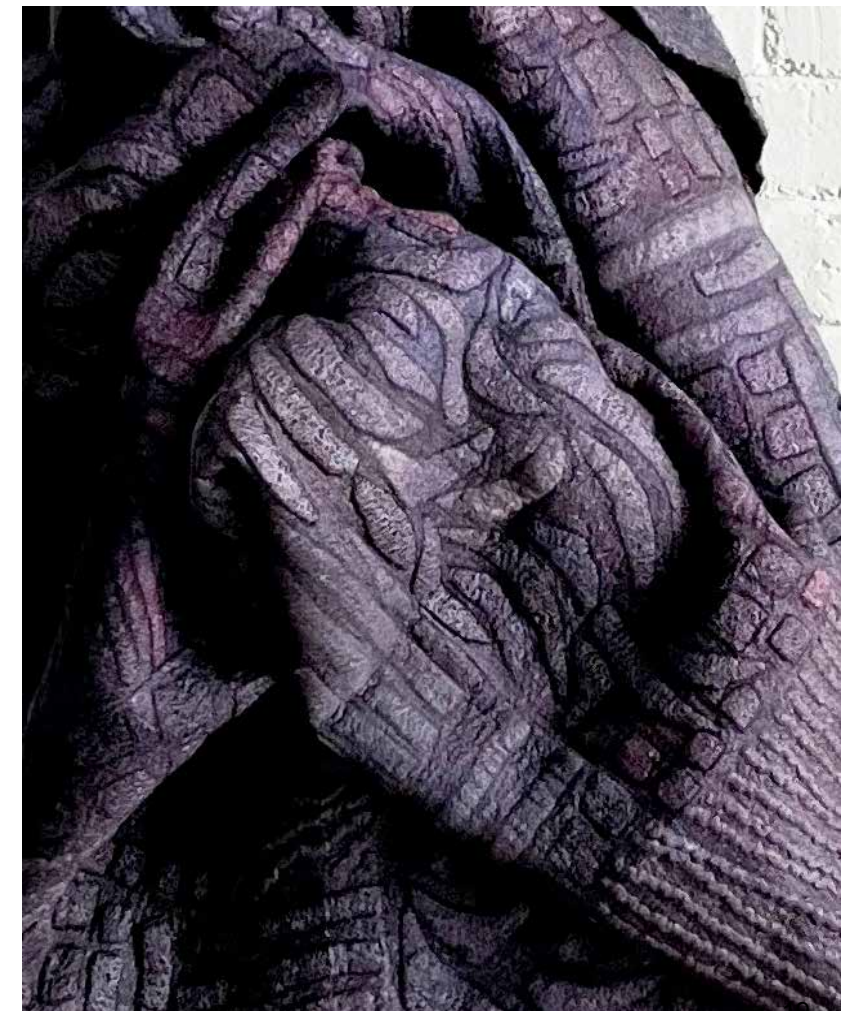
Vera Alexanderova has established a niche fashion practice, selling one-off hand-crafted clothing that is exquisite, unique, and distinctive. Her beautiful clothing and accessories involve a complex process requiring skills and knowledge of technique, creativity, and deep understanding of her chosen media.

1. Please tell your story. What inspired you to start on this path, your background training and what has driven you to achieve at this high level in such a competitive and difficult industry.

My journey as an artist began 1992 when I decided to abandon my path of being a professional musician and instead become a designer. I enrolled at the Technical University in Moscow where I studied couture and costume design. As I immersed myself in the world of fashion, my life was instantly overtaken by my interest in Folk Art, high fashion, and the history of textile traditions. Many young artists search for a specific artistic practice, styles, and techniques that suits them. I discovered that I enjoyed decorating fabrics, and that I was able to express myself creatively that way. Once I learned the origins and rich history of felt, understood the process, and realised the tremendous variety of raw fibres available, I didn't look back.

2. Your work is heavily technique based. Your nuno-felted textural jackets are quite unique. Exquisitely beautiful fashion statements that are skilfully crafted. What was involved in the creation of the purple nuno-felted shibori jacket and why is it significant in your development?

I always looked to evolve my art. Initially it began with wool, then silk got added, and then I added the idea of recycling to it. From working on my previous works I always had leftover pieces of felt that I kept just in case, but had no



Nuno felted jacket detail



Vera Alexanderova standing in front of her Felted Wool Wallhanging Triptych

real use for. One day I decided to cut them up and turn them into textile mosaics. This allowed me to add another unique design feature in my arsenal, whilst continuing to promote nature and sustainable fashion. This piece consists of four layer silk, a thin layer of wool, then the mosaic, followed by a final layer of silk. When this sandwich of sorts is done, its all felted and turned into one piece.

3. Please describe any additional items that reflect an important stage or turning point or stylistic achievement.

I was never interested in repeating the same thing over and over again. With felt, I always wanted to explore ways to establish new techniques, pushing the limits of wool as a material. At the start of my career my work was quite bulky, very warm, but bulky. I mainly focused on coats and sweaters which are the traditional garments associated with felt. However, having migrated to Australia, there was no longer a need for heavily insulated clothing, which pushed me to test how thin one could felt. Now, many years have passed, and I'd like to say that I have mastered the thinness, elegance and flexibility that wool can achieve, especially through combining it with silk. In recent years, through collaboration with my friend and fellow designer Galina, I have discovered a new way to incorporate felt into fashion. Whilst Galina, being an excellent seamstress, sewed these extravagant blouses, I felt a thin, silk based, sheet of felt, to then be cut into desired shapes. Following that, I proceeded to cut them into flowers, and hand sew the floral decorative elements onto the organza blouse. The incredibly unique result was a light, mostly transparent blouse, decorated with an array of delicately placed decorations. This piece features countless hours of hard work all done by hand.



4. You have established a business that successfully sells and promotes your work.

How difficult is it to balance your creative talent and the daily challenge of running a business.

Running the business is a secondary worry to me as my primary goal is to create. However, one aspect of the business side of things which I have recently focused on, was opening up felt to new audiences. To appeal to a wider audience whilst staying true to my creative desires, I have extended my area of work to interior design. To further increase my sales whilst promoting the incredible versatility of felt I have begun to make items such as pillows, blankets and wall hangings. Instead of creating wearable pieces that are bold and extravagant and not everyone could wear, my works now includes items anyone would have in their home. Maintaining the uniqueness and the beauty of my work, I can now accommodate more clients than ever, and provide objects in various price ranges.

5. Can you describe any opportunities and/or obstacles that you have met along the way to establishing your current business.

It isn't as much of a business to me but rather a hobby. Yes I have applied more effort to advertising and promoting my art previously. But now it is rather a hobby that I enjoy greatly.

Vera Alexanderova's website is: <https://www.alexanderova.com/>

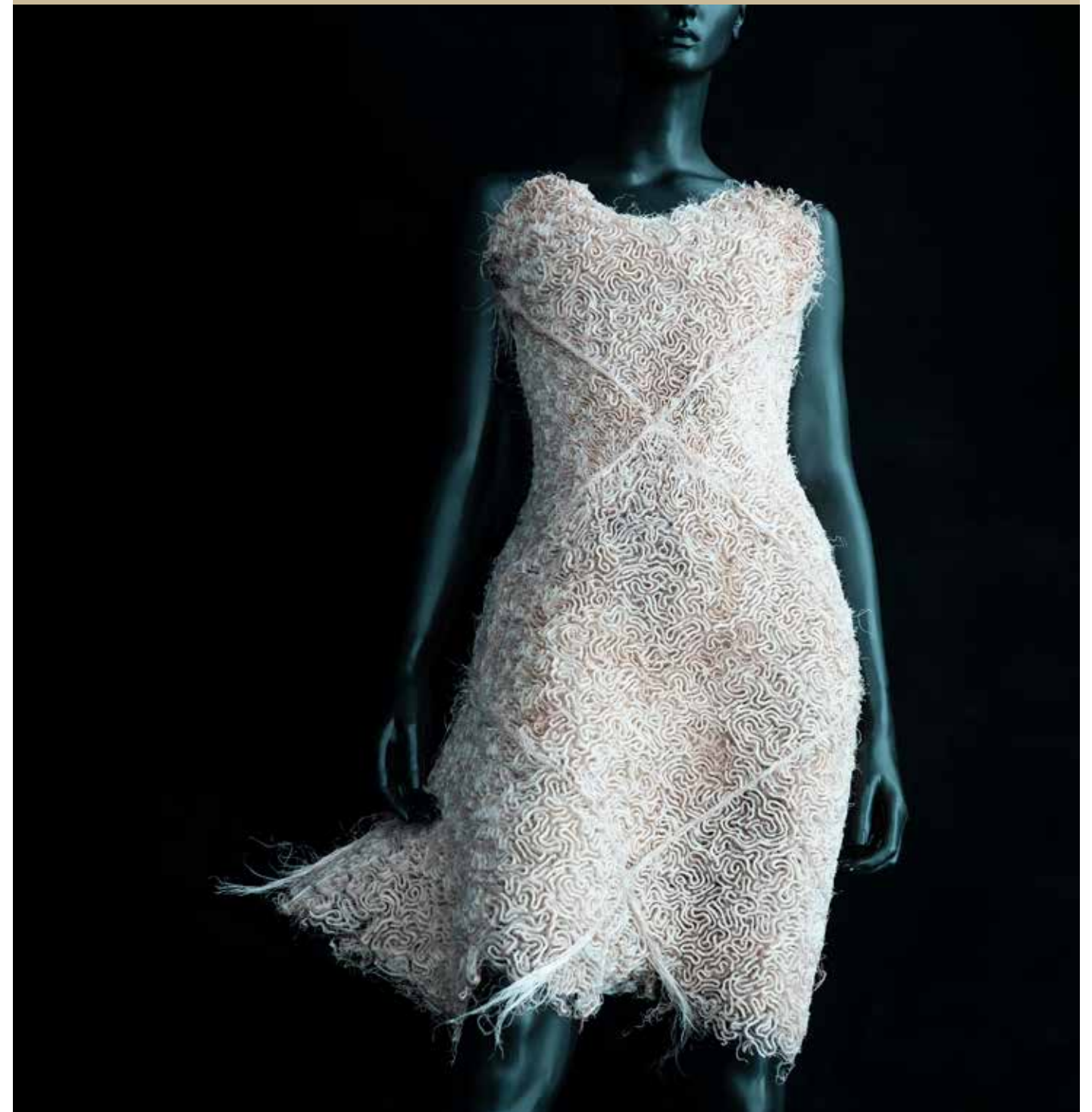
Her Instagram tag is: @vera_alexanderova



White Fantasy Felted wall hanging.

ZENA HOLLOWAY

WHAT IF WE COULD GROW OUR CLOTHES FROM SEED?



dress - sea coral pattern grown from grass root



collar grown from grass root 24

ZENA HOLLOWAY

WHAT IF WE COULD GROW OUR CLOTHES FROM SEED?

Zena Holloway is both an underwater photographer and an artist/designer who grows fashion, sculpture and wearables from grass root and in doing so takes an intuitive leap into the future to imagine a material world that is grown, not made.

Her career as an underwater photographer has made her acutely aware of the true depth of the plastic problem in our oceans and rivers. The camera exposes pollution so visible, so devastating and so guilt-inducing that it led her to search for solutions in material science and biodesign.

Biodesign is an emerging design movement, incorporating the use of living organisms such as yeast, bacteria, algae and fungi to grow new materials. Zena grew mycelium in her basement for a year before encountering the tangled root system of a willow tree in her local river: What if we could grow our clothes from seed?

The idea took root and grew...

She has pioneered a new technique of growing wheatgrass into templates carved from beeswax. Over 12 days the shoots grow to 20cm while the root binds below to form a naturally woven structure. With sustainability at the heart of the process, the ingredients are organic and locally sourced. Water is reused from runoff and any leftover shoot, seed or root is eaten as animal fodder.

The pieces show that the power of plants is infinitely renewable and nature's amazing capabilities are simply waiting for us to tap into.

Text taken from Zena's website and reproduced with her permission

Zena's website is worth a visit as she has videos and slide show images of her work which bring another striking dimension to her photographs.

<https://zenaholloway.com/>

You can also follow Zena on Instagram @root.full

<https://www.instagram.com/root.full/?hl=en>



Reef Dress detail



Grass root with coral texture, Zena Holloway



Zena has created a video that can be viewed directly from her website. Click on the link and then scroll down Zena's home page to locate the video: <https://zenaholloway.com/>



Zena Holloway growing root



CraftNSW upcoming exhibition
'Handcrafted, the perfect gift'

at

Brush Farm

19 Lawson Street, Eastwood

April 26th - 30th
Just before Mothers' Day.

Claudia Chan Shaw
"Art Nouveau - ahead of the curve"

Claudia's Powerpoint Talk"
Forsters Hall adjacent to Brush Farm House
19 Lawson St, Eastwood
11 - 11.45 am, Saturday, 29th April 2023

Untethered Fibre Artists Inc.: Signatures







HAWKESBURY REGIONAL GALLERY
12 February – 6 April, 2023
Deerubbin Centre, 1st Floor/300
George St,
Windsor NSW 2756
Monday, Wednesday-Friday 10am-4pm
Saturday-Sunday 10am-3pm
Closed on Tuesday and public holidays
<https://untetheredfibreartists.com/>

Signatures investigates the making of a mark – the distinctive pattern, notion or characteristic by which someone or something may be identified. Each artwork rephrases assumptions and reflects the diversity in approach to artmaking, through the vocabulary of fibre. The exhibition concepts and materiality are explored through installation, wearables and sculpture, enabling critical reflections and thoughtful projections from the artists.



The Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW trading as craftnsw
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Incorporated 1929
ABN: 55 000 022 195
Patron: Professor The Honourable Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO
Ambassador: Claudia Chan Shaw

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