



pins & needles

TEXTILE AND TECHNIQUE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN COLLECTION

SPONSOR'S MESSAGE

Myer is pleased to join with the National Gallery of Victoria in presenting this very unique exhibition, *Pins & Needles: Textile and Technique from the Australian Collection*.

As an important part of the Victorian community for more than 100 years, Myer has a long history of supporting local fashion and textile designers. Myer is proud to continue this tradition of support by sponsoring the *Pins & Needles* exhibition at the NGV.

Australian textile makers are renowned around the world for their innovative use of materials and creative design. *Pins & Needles*, the first exhibition at the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia to focus on the NGV's extensive collection of textiles, weaves a journey through the intricate worlds of embroidery, tapestry, quilting and more.

Pins & Needles also marks the launch of Myer's partnership with the NGV, which will see a diverse mix of fashion and textiles exhibitions across both NGV sites, The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia at Federation Square and NGV International on St Kilda Road. We are pleased to present the Myer Fashion and Textiles Galleries as part of our commitment to all Australians.

Myer would like to welcome you to the world of Australian textiles. Please enjoy *Pins & Needles: Textile and Technique from the Australian Collection*.

Dawn Robertson
Managing Director
Myer Grace Bros

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PINS & NEEDLES:

TEXTILE AND TECHNIQUE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN COLLECTION

INTRODUCTION

Pins & Needles brings together contemporary, historical, functional, wearable and purely decorative works from the National Gallery of Victoria's Australian Fashion and Textiles collection. Exploring a diverse range of textile techniques, the exhibition includes everything from quilting, embroidery and screenprinting, to weaving, crochet, knitting and beyond. The range of works gathered in this exhibition celebrate the richness of our local textile design heritage through the distinctive and innovative approaches developed by Australian textile artists past and present.

The selected works capture the many levels of textile creation and transformation. With some pieces the artist has started with fibres and used a combination of processes to construct a piece, incorporating knots, stitches, loops and weaves. Others have begun on a fabric ground which they have embellished, dissolved, dyed or printed using a variety of methods. This latter approach to technique is also manifest in the resurfacing, piecing and reconstruction of existing fabrics. Some techniques are adopted in a singular sense, but artists also blend, adapt and appropriate making methods as part of a more multi-layered design practice.

The physical form of these works and the source of their inspiration alternate between acknowledgment of their Australian origin and a response to a personal or global starting point. The use of motifs that speak directly to an Australian lineage is apparent in works such as Bee Taplin's printed textile design *Koala*, c. 1955, Linda Jackson's *Black Opal Lightening Ridge poncho*, 1981, and Jean Goldberg's needlepoint lace shoe '*Australia you are standing in it*', 1986. Alternatively, those examples that reflect and respond to alternative cultural traditions and express universal concerns such as innovation include Mrs Edwin Field's *Crochet lace sampler*, 1922, Naomi Ota's *Island to island* weaving series, 1998 and Meredith Rowe's *Beercan lace*, 2001–02.

The relative function of these works also reflects the diversity that has existed within over two centuries of personal and professional textile practice. The exhibition contrasts the multiple roles of textile arts in our daily lives. Some have been created as an end in themselves, others for translation into furniture, furnishings or domestic items, and, significantly, many form the basis of our wearable material culture.

Pins & Needles is the fourth exhibition to be shown in the NGV's new dedicated space for the Australian Fashion and Textiles collection at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, and the first to explicitly focus on textile and technique.

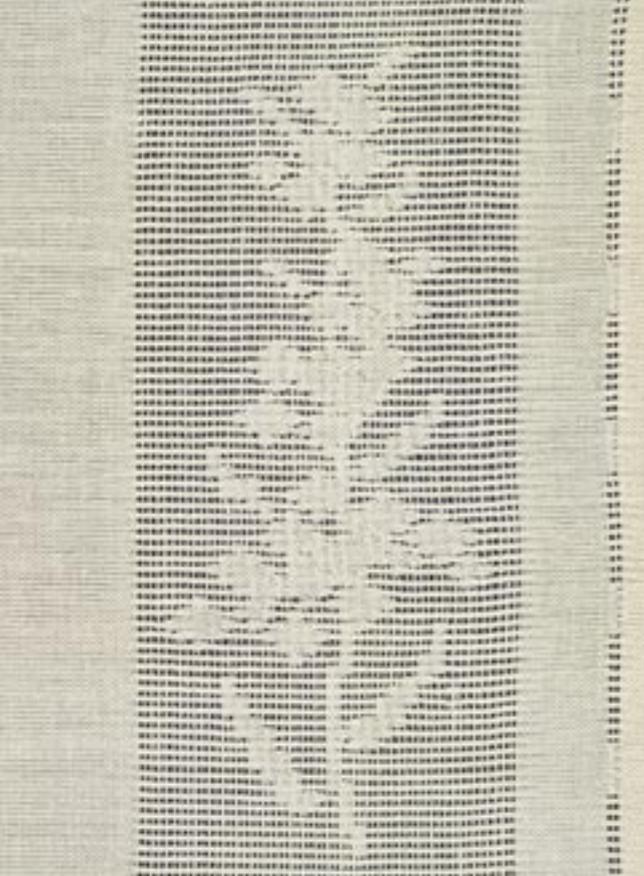
Katie Somerville
Curator, Australian Fashion and Textiles

embroidery / em-broi-duhry / 1 the art of working, with a needle, raised and ornamental designs in threads of silk, cotton, gold, silver or other material, upon a woven fabric, leather, paper, etc.

Mantlepiece valance and curtains, c. 1890, was created by an unknown Tasmanian maker and reflects the popularity of floral-based embellishment during the late nineteenth century. Deftly worked by hand on a black silk satin ground, each of the panels features three-dimensional representations of indigenous flora such as wattle, waratah and blue gum.

Nearly 100 years later, artist Heather Dorrough used her sewing machine needle to 'draw' *The front door*, 1979. A key work from her 'Wollombi Farm Series', this image of rural life past and present is rendered in threads of silk and wool using appliqué, machine embroidery and needlepoint.



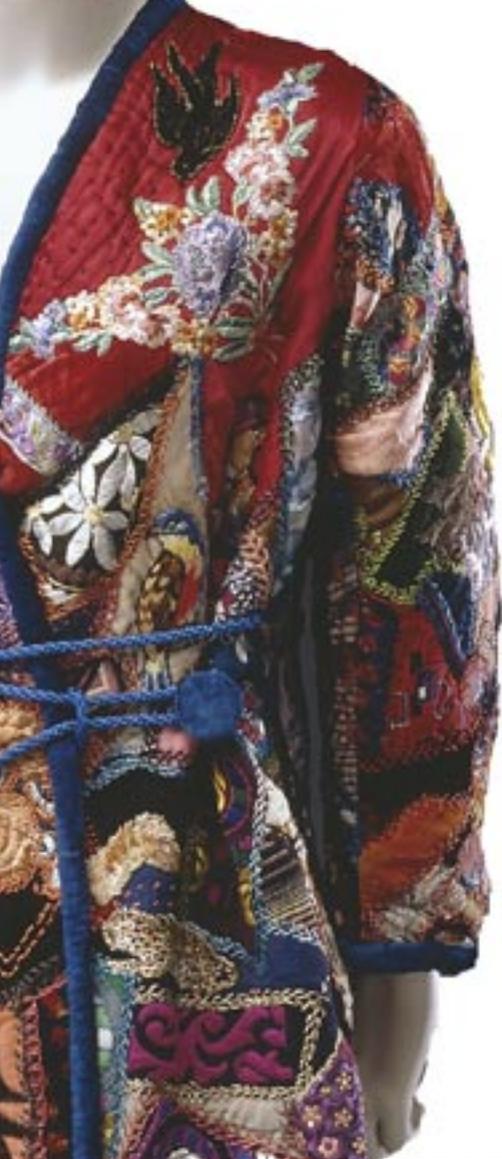


weave v. 1 to interlace (threads, yarns, strips, fibrous, material, etc.) so as to form a fabric or texture.

Rachel Grieve was a key artist in the development of weaving in early twentieth-century Australia. After spending almost twenty years studying and working overseas, she returned to Australia in 1937 to establish a career as a specialist weaver. She worked predominantly in natural fibres – especially linen – which she often spun herself. *Placemat*, c. 1955, features a subtle, woven, wattle blossom motif.

Contemporary weaver Liz Williamson has chosen to explore the potential of surface contours and puckering by playing with the tension of her weave and mixing wool with nylon fishing line in her large-scale wrap *Texture 1*, 1995.

Tapestry is a further example of woven textile form. In Australia, the Victorian Tapestry Workshop, established in Melbourne in 1976, has been responsible for some of the country's most significant commissions for public tapestry. In the 1980s the NGV commissioned a triptych of tapestries based on three works by Australian artist Roger Kemp. Woven over a period of six years by the workshop, *Evolving forms*, 1984, *Piano movement*, 1989, and *Organic form*, 1991, are now on permanent display in the Great Hall at NGV International.



patchwork/quilt *n.* 1 work made of pieces of cloth or leather of various colours or shapes sewn together, used especially for covering quilts, cushions, etc. To stitch together (two pieces of cloth with a soft interlining), usually in an ornamental pattern.

Crazy patchwork is just one example of the patchwork technique that first found popularity in the late Victorian period. The use of the word 'crazy' relates to the seemingly random and asymmetrical piecing together of irregularly shaped pieces of plush and decorative fabrics.

Dressing gown, 1935, was made by dressmaker Mrs Annie Ellis of Geelong for the trousseau of her niece. Elaborate embroidery incorporating herringbone, feather, fly and chain stitches, in silk, wool and metallic threads has been used to outline each overlapping piece of fabric. The technique is not restricted to quilts but extends to tea-cosies, bags, cushions, curtains, firescreens, slippers and even piano covers.

Welcome to the doll house, 1997, is an example of a contemporary textile artist working within the traditional realm of the quilt. Quilting is often a means of rendering personal stories and family memories in textile form. In this work of 120 individual squares, Crowest has incorporated photographic heat-transfer printed images of her collection of quirky vintage dolls and toys alongside hand-screenprinted textile designs.



Mrs Annie ELLIS *Dressing gown* 1935 (detail)



knit v. 1 to make (a garment, fabric, etc.) by interlacing loops of yarn, either by hand with knitting needles or by machine.

The endless possibilities of the texture, form, and scale of knits have seduced many Australian textile artists and designers.

During the 1980s, a local knitwear resurgence coined the term 'Art knit'.¹ Producing one-off hand-knits and limited production machine knits that played with sculptural forms, inventive patterning and design motifs, designers such as Jenny Kee and Maureen Fitzgerald provided fresh perspectives on knitwear.

Michael Glover, a self-proclaimed 'knit sculptor', also began developing knitted collections during the 1980s. In this later example – *'Nordic salesman in swing dress wearing showgirl choker'*, 1994 – Glover collaborated with textile artist Douglas McManus to create an alternative mode of dress for men, a continuation of their experimental menswear collection of several years earlier.

print/screenprint/batik *v. 1* to produce (a text or a picture) by applying inked types, plates, blocks or suchlike, with direct pressure to paper or other material; a process of printing from stencils that have been created photographically or cut by hand, through a fine mesh of silk, metal or other material; a method of printing cloth by applying wax to seal off areas of the fabric in a desired pattern, before applying the ink.

Michael O'Connell was one of the earliest exponents of textile print methods in Australia. Arriving from England in 1920, he was influenced by the modernist design sensibility present in London at the time. Utilizing woodblock and lino to print textiles, wall hangings and curtains, O'Connell's designs featured everything from jazz-inspired party scenes to indigenous Australian flora and fauna. *Moon and stars*, c. 1933, combines a languid female figure in a stylized landscape and would have been sold as a wall hanging in Melbourne via mail order or through specialist outlets such as the Primrose Pottery and the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria.

Another significant figure in the development of printed textile design and manufacture in Australia was Frances Burke. In 1937 she and Morris Holloway established Burway Prints – the first registered screen printery in Australia. A champion of innovative design in all disciplines, she had a strong colour sense and a clear educational agenda. Collaborating closely with contemporary architects, interior designers and furniture designers, she worked hard to promote local design. *Rangga*, 1941, was the result of a textile design commission from architect Roy Grounds, for his flat on the Yarra River, Melbourne.

Several decades later, another generation of designers were developing new relationships to textile print design. With independent fashion as a medium, the 'art clothes' phenomenon was underpinned by a commitment to the introduction and innovation of new techniques and approaches to print design. Fabric and fashion became the canvas.

Sara Thorn and Bruce Slorach established their first textile/fashion label in 1983. *Princess dress* dates from this first year of collaboration. Their focus was the production of hand-printed textiles and the development of related fashion collections. The printed and over-painted surface of this dress draws on the eclectic sources and dynamic design sensibilities for which they became known.





Dating from the following year, Matthew Flinn's '*Fluorescent spirals' top and skirt* also uses clothing as a vehicle to 'show off' printed fabric designs, and in doing so, highlights his potential for the aesthetic qualities of the textile to drive the garment design.

The painting, dyeing and printing of fabric lengths has a limited history in Australian Indigenous art practice. These techniques were first introduced to communities in the 1970s, with government funding and assistance by teachers, adult educators and arts advisers. Batik production by Indigenous artists originated in 1971 at Ernabella, a Pitjantjatjara community located in the Musgrave Ranges in South Australia. From the Pitjantjatjara lands, batik spread to the Utopia community in late 1977.

In 1994, Jill Squire ran a batik workshop for senior Pintupi women from Kintore, resulting in some inspired cotton batiks of muted pinks, greens, yellows and white.

In Alice Nampitjinpa's *Fabric length*, 1994, the use of many concentric circles upon a field of dots is a classic Pintupi composition, suggestive of many important sites in the Gibson Desert.

Experimenting with alternative print techniques and inspired by Asian textile traditions, the works of Julie Ryder and Meredith Rowe explore further approaches to creating the printed cloth.

Ryder began using fermenting fruit to print (Nigredo) on fabric in the early 1990s, after becoming curious as to the effect of rotting organic matter on fabric. Over a period of six months the decaying fruit gradually stains the cloth to form impressions. In *Citronatas*, 1999, each one of the silk sections is printed using this fermentation process.

Meredith Rowe's five textile hangings took ten months to produce. After conceiving the idea in Korea, the fabrics were hand-printed during the final six weeks of Rowe's 2001 Asialink Visual Arts/Craft residency. They were then cut, layered and constructed upon her return to Melbourne. They form a kind of textile notebook and incorporate materials from the making process, such as the steaming cloth and print table coverings.

Matthew FLINN '*Fluorescent spirals' top and skirt* 1984 (detail)



lace/crochet *n.* **1** a netlike, ornamental fabric made of threads by hand or machine; a kind of needlework done with a needle having at one end a small hook for drawing the thread or yarn into intertwined loops.

In 1909 crochet evangelist Mrs Edwin Field published her own book, *Australian Lace Crochet: Easy and artistic, by a Briton beyond the seas.*² It was her hope that it would raise the status of crochet in relation to the time-honoured practice of needlepoint lace. Her carefully labelled samplers of Australian lace crochet were created and donated to the NGV's collection by the artist in the same year – 1922.

Another innovator in the area, Jean Goldberg, was inspired to learn needlepoint lace-making while working as a librarian at the Victorian Embroiderers Guild. Her work 'Australia you are standing in it', 1986, utilizes lace to form a single shoe of kangaroo paw, bottlebrush and wattle flowers, in nylon monofilament, cotton, plastic, and glass beads.



CHECKLIST

Embroidery

UNKNOWN, Tasmania

Mantlepiece valance and curtains c. 1890
silk, wool
144.0 x 236.2 x 6.5 cm (framed)
Purchased, 1988 (CT64.a-c-1988)

UNKNOWN, Australia

Waistcoat c. 1890
linen, silk, cotton, shell, metal
56.0 x 42.0 cm
Gift of Terence Lane, 1978 (D15-1978)

UNKNOWN, Australia

Sampler 1900–30
cotton
24.0 x 43.0 cm
Gift from Mrs Anderson in memory of Mrs Louch, 1978
(D164A-1978)

Heather DORROUGH

born England 1933, arrived in Australia 1961
The front door 1979
cotton, wool, silk, acrylic
133.5 x 106.0 cm
Purchased, 1979 (D177-1979)

Patchwork/Quilt

UNKNOWN, Australia/England

Patchwork cover c.1890
silk, cotton, paper, ink
157.0 x 131.5 cm
Gift of Lady Cohen, 1970 (D44-1970)

Mrs Annie ELLIS maker

Dressing gown 1935
silk, cotton, wool, viscose rayon, metal thread
centre back: 126.0 cm; sleeve: 51.0 cm
Gift of Mrs Annie C. Champion, 1989 (CT136-1989)

Sarah CROWEST

born Great Britain 1957, arrived in Australia 1985
Welcome to the doll house 1997
cotton, polyester; hand screenprinted, painted
and embroidered
182.0 x 154.0 cm
Purchased, 1998 (1998.3)

MICHELLE JANK, Australia

est. c. 2000
Michelle JANK designer
born Australia 1976
Federation dress 2001
cotton, metal
centre back: 133.0 cm waist: 34.5 cm, length: 133.0 cm
Purchased, 2003 (2003.175)

Weave

Rachel GRIEVE

Australia 1885–1977 worked United States 1920–1937
Placemat c. 1955
linen
58.0 x 34.0 cm
Purchased, 1956 (1649-D4)

*VICTORIAN TAPESTRY WORKSHOP, Melbourne

est. 1976
Roger KEMP
Australia 1908–1987
Evolving forms 1984
wool, cotton
501.0 x 535.6 cm
Commission by The Art Foundation of Victoria with funds
provided by Dame Elizabeth Murdoch, Founder Benefactor,
1984 (CT184-1984)

Piano movement 1989

wool, cotton
496.7 x 548.2 cm
Commission by The Art Foundation of Victoria with funds
provided by Dame Elizabeth Murdoch, Founder Benefactor,
1984 (CT134-1989)

Organic form 1991

wool, cotton
496.8 x 546.0 cm
Commission by The Art Foundation of Victoria with funds
provided by Dame Elizabeth Murdoch, Founder Benefactor,
1984 (CT74-1991)

*These works are on permanent display in the Great Hall,
NGV International

LIZ WILLIAMSON, Australia

est. 1988
Liz WILLIAMSON
born Australia 1949
Texture 1 1995
wool, nylon, lycra
225.0 x 52.0 cm
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by
Mrs. Lauraine Diggins, Fellow, 1996 (1996.390)

Naomi OTA

born Japan 1963, arrived in Australia 1992
Island to island IV 1998
silk, cotton, ochres, raffia, metallic thread, wood
171.0 x 63.5 cm
Purchased, 1998 (1998.26.1)

Island to island V 1998

silk, cotton, ochres, metallic thread, wood
171.0 x 63.5 cm
Purchased, 1998 (1998.26.2)

Island to island VI 1998

silk, cotton, ochres, metallic thread, wood
171.0 x 64.5 cm
Purchased, 1998 (1998.26.3)

ILKA WHITE, Melbourne

est. 1997
Ilka WHITE
born Australia 1972
Split ribbon wrap 2003
230.0 x 45.0 cm
cotton, polyester, silk, viscose, wool; hand-woven and pieced
Purchased, 2003

Felted feather scarf 2003

215.0 x 45.0 cm

wool, cockerel tail feathers; hand-woven and felted

Purchased, 2003

SCANLAN & THEODORE, Melbourne

est. 1987

ILKA WHITE, Melbourne

est. 1997

Ilka WHITE

born Australia 1972

Jet fringed shawl 2003

275.0 x 35.0 cm

cotton, viscose, lurex, glass (beads); hand-woven

Purchased, 2003

Knit

UNKNOWN, Australia

Reticule c. 1890

cotton, silk

18.0 x 22.0 cm (irreg.)

Gift of Mrs Shirley Schneisler, 1972 (D056-1972)

MAUREEN FITZGERALD, Australia

est. c. 1981–1982

Maureen FITZGERALD designer

born Australia 1960

'Motion in colour' dress 1983

wool, leather, synthetic fibre

centre back: 116.0 cm; sleeve length: 41.0 cm

Gift of Mr and Mrs Mario Schwal, 1983 (CT116-1983)

FLAMINGO PARK, Sydney

est. 1973–1995

Jenny KEE designer

born Australia 1947

Jan AYRES knitter

born Great Britain 1947

'Mali Oz' and 'Petroglyph outfit 1983

cotton; handknitted

dress: centre back 75.5 cm; trousers: 89.0 cm

Presented by Vogue Australia, 1983 (CT104 A-B-1983)

HOUSE OF REX, MICHAEL GLOVER KNITS, Melbourne

est. 1990

Michael GLOVER designer

born Australia 1957

Douglas McMANUS

born Australia 1959

'Nordic salesman in swing dress wearing showgirl choker'

1994

mohair, silk, cotton, chenille, leather, metal, rubber, wool

dimensions variable

Purchased, 1994 (CT426.a-g-1994)

LORINDA GRANT, Australia

est. 1999

Lorinda GRANT designer

born Australia 1975

Federation outfit 2002

wool; raw and processed, metal, quartz, silk

dimensions variable

Purchased, 2003

Print/screenprint/batik

Michael O'CONNELL

born England 1896, arrived Australia 1920–1937,

died Great Britain 1973

Moon and stars c. 1933

linen; hand-printed

135.5 x 89.0 cm

Gift of Mrs Kathleen Montgomery, 1988 (CT45-1988)

FRANCES BURKE FABRICS, Melbourne

est. 1937, closed c. 1967

Frances BURKE designer

Australia 1907–1994

'Rangga' 1941

cotton; screenprinted

89.0 x 62.0 cm

Presented by Frances Burke, 1989 (CT37-1989)

MODERNAGE FABRICS

Silk and Textile Printers Ltd, Sydney and Hobart

est. 1939, closed 1969

Russell DRYSDALE

Australia 1912–1981

Stone and wood 1947

cotton; screenprinted

98.0 x 90.0 cm

Gift of Sir Joseph Burke, 1979 (D75F-1979)

FAULKINER FABRICS

est 1955, closed c. 1969

Bee TAPLIN designer

born Australia 1911, to England 1928–c.1950,

arrived in Australia c. 1950

Koala c. 1955

cotton; screenprinted

65.0 x 59.0 cm

Gift of Bee Taplin, 1987 (CT33-1987)

FLAMINGO PARK, Sydney

1973–1995

Linda JACKSON designer

born Australia 1950

Black Opal Lightning Ridge poncho 1981

poly/cotton; screenprinted

centre back: 120.0 cm; width: 88.0 cm

Purchased, 1992 (CT31-1992)

SARA THORN, Melbourne

1983–1985

Sara THORN designer

born Australia 1961

Bruce SLORACH designer

born Australia 1961

Princess dress 1983

cotton: screenprint, plastic, metal

centre back: 132.0 cm; waist: 38.0 cm

Presented by the National Gallery Women's Association, 1996

(1995.764)

Matthew FLINN

born The Netherlands 1958, arrived Australia 1964

'Fluorescent spirals' top and skirt 1984

cotton; screenprinted, shell

top: centre back: 72.0 cm; skirt: centre back: 81.0 cm,

waist: 33.0 cm

Purchased, 1998 (1998.57.a-b)

VIXEN, Melbourne

est. 1993

Georgia CHAPMAN designer

born Australia 1970

Meredith ROWE designer

born Australia 1969

Outfit: comprising top, skirt, pants and wrap 1997

spring–summer

from *The Arabesque Collection, Japan series*silk; hand-dyed, hand-printed, glass, plastic, metal foil, elastane
dimensions variable

Purchased, 1997 (1997.372.a-d)

Tony DYER

born Australia 1942

Mutual support 1998

silk, fibre reactive dyes; batik

300.0 x 50.0 cm

Purchased, 1999 (1999.32)

JULIE RYDER, Australia

est. 1989

Julie RYDER

born Australia 1960

Citronatas 1999

silk, polyester, metal thread

295.5 x 103.0 cm

Purchased, 1999 (1999.283)

KINTORE WOMEN'S BATIK WORKSHOP, Kintore

Northern Territory, 1994

Alice NAMPITJINPA

born Pintupi c. 1945

Fabric length 1994

cotton, batik

195.0 x 112.3 cm

Purchased, 1996 (1996.735)

GALIWIN'KU COMMUNITY SCREENPRINTING, Elcho Island

Northern Territory, est 1994

Red bead tree 1995

cotton; screenprinted

302.5 x 139.5 cm

Purchased, 1996 (1996.603)

Meredith ROWE

born Australia 1969

Beercan lace 2001–02

ramie, calico, metallic and silk thread, ink and pigment dyes,

crêpe paste, cotton

39.0 x 193.0 cm

Purchased, 2002 (2002.136)

Magnolia 2001–02

ramie, ink, discharge paste, videotape, cotton

30.0 x 186.0 cm

Purchased, 2002 (2002.135)

Fusion food 2001–02

ramie, silk, jade beads, ink and pigment dyes, cotton

26.0 x 297.0 cm

Purchased, 2002 (2002.133)

Puff 2001–02

ramie, ink and pigment dyes, cotton

51.5 x 123.0 cm

Purchased, 2002 (2002.134)

This product is unbelievably delicious 2001–02

ramie, nylon, metal, silk thread, lead pencil, ink dyes, cotton

31.0 x 214.0 cm

Purchased, 2002 (2002.132)

Lace/Crochet**Mrs Edwin FIELD**

born Scotland 1842, arrived in Australia 1855, died 1936

Crochet lace sampler 1922

cotton, cardboard, paper, ink

25.0 x 20.0 cm

Gift of Mrs Edwin Field, 1922 (2396A.a-e-D3)

Crochet lace sampler 1922

cotton, cardboard, paper, ink

40.0 x 30.0 cm

Gift of Mrs Edwin Field, 1922 (2396A-B.a-v-D3)

ABBOTSFORD CONVENT, Melbourne

est. 1863

Wedding veil 1923

cotton

267.0 x 250.0 cm

Gift of Mrs Betty Roland, 1984 (CT30-1984)

Jean GOLDBERG

born Australia 1927

'Australia you are standing in it' 1986

nylon, cotton, plastic, glass (beads)

19.5 x 6.5 cm x 15.0 cm

Gift of Carolyn May, 1986 (CT3-1986)

NOTES

1 For example, the following exhibition – *Art Knits: Contemporary Knitwear by Australian Designers*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 17 May–26 June 1988.

2 Field, M.A., *Australian Lace Crochet: Easy and artistic, by a Briton beyond the seas* (Mrs. Edwin Field), London, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1909.

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