

Ro's Reviews



A new quality textile magazine: selvedge

I remember way back when I first discovered **Crafts** magazine. It was knock-out: lovely to handle and to look at; great photography, serious coverage of quality craftwork, and every issue to be stashed away for future reference. **selvedge** rekindled that sense of excitement, and what's more it's ALL textiles!

Issue No. 1 appeared in July with features including: the textile conservation work of the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester; Tracey Emin's quilts, Ghandi and the cotton khadi cloth which became emblematic of peaceful revolution in India, and modern designers' use of it today; environmentally-friendly fabrics; fans; the work of Thomasina Beck; Finnish textiles — and much more. Reviews and up-coming exhibitions are also listed. The illustrations are very fine — you won't be handing these over to the children to cut up. The journal is square, chunky, and printed on good paper, and aspires to cover "The Fabric of Your Life: Textiles in fine art, fashion, interiors, travel and shopping" — something for everyone there, then. You won't find how-to articles and knitting patterns here, but you will certainly be informed and inspired. It's quite expensive: £7.50/E12 or \$15 in USA, but only appears bi-monthly. I would think it a must for any serious textile artist and wish its Editor Polly Leonard and her team every success.

selvedge is on sale in Borders and Waterstone (& The Beetroot Tree!) or go to www.selvedge.org for more details.

"Threads" at Nottingham Castle

I went up to the Castle to view this new exhibition. 130 textile items from all over the world are beautifully displayed behind glass in subdued lighting, but there are also hands-on activities for little visitors and a dressing-up box is provided; or one can sit and watch, at the touch of a button, several short videos about costume and culture. Two laminated books tie in with the main exhibits which are allowed to "speak for themselves", as it were. For example:

No. 119: Woman's scarf hand made from dog hair

"I was made from hand dyed, spun and knitted Samoyed hair.

"I was made around 1985 by Rowena Parr for sale under her label 'Sensitive Plant'.

"I am an example of a totally hand-made item in an age of mass production.... etc."

Yes, folks! Somehow, one of my early experimental pieces has found its way into the exhibition, as well as some mittens and hat from the same era dyed with woad, alkanet, dandelion and dock.

There are a number of other Nottingham-made items including an unfinished patchwork made of silk dress materials c.1860s by Sylvia Cauldwell in 1900; some Leavers lace which was buried in a bottle in 1871 and unearthed from the Mansfield Rd. Wesleyan Chapel more than a hundred years later; and a piece of mediaeval cloth found in caves in Middle Pavement. There are more modern pieces, too: a patchwork by Pauline Burbage, jewellery by Caroline Broadhead, and a man's knitted jacket designed by Robin Kerr of GForce in 1990.

What to say? It's a nicely assembled exhibition but, like many museum exhibitions these days, rather simplistic. No doubt it will be of interest to school groups, but it lacks depth, if you know what I mean. Many, if not all the items, are from the Museum of Costume and Textiles down the road, which closed last year, in spite of a determined campaign to keep it open. I felt moved to ring Jeremy Farrell, its Director, for his comments. He explained that the entire collection is still *in situ* at the premises in Castle Gate under his care and there are no immediate plans to move it anywhere else, though the doors are firmly locked to casual visitors. However, researchers and interested groups may view the collection by appointment. email: jeremyf@ncmg.demon.co.uk or ring 0115- 9153541.

"Threads" is scheduled to remain in place at the Castle for about five years, with items of community interest changing every year; at the moment there is an interesting mini-display of Polish textiles. Enquiries: 0115-9153700 or send Ro sae for a leaflet. Admission to Nottingham Castle is free on weekdays and costs £2/£1 at weekends and Bank Holidays.

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