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Published in conjunction with the *Powerhouse Museum 2nd International Lace for Fashion Award Exhibition* curated by Rosemary Shepherd at the Powerhouse Museum 6 July – 14 October 2001.

Cover image (detail): 'Shiro Kuro' man's shirt. Anne Farren, WA, Australia. Photograph by Robert Frith.

Introduction

Rosemary Shepherd

Curator and coordinator

Powerhouse Museum International Lace for Fashion Award

As a young Australian, brought up in a country town, my experience of lace was limited to machine-made 'chantilly', 'guipure' and 'honiton' lace. I still remember how astonished I was to discover, while living in England in the 1960s, that real honiton lace was hand-made by interweaving threads, wound on what looked like small wooden sticks, over a pattern fastened to a cushion.

In the years following I learned to make lace myself, and along the way discovered that the sensational history of lace is due entirely to the pursuit of fashion. Lace never had a useful purpose, something that makes it unusual among textiles. Its sole justification has been its decorative function, beginning with the embellishment of the seams of garments or household textiles, over 500 years ago. In the early 1500s lace began to emerge as a fashion accessory and by the late 1500s it was an essential part of fashionable dress for both men and women throughout Europe.

The fashionable use of lace is documented in paintings from the early 1500s when it appears on the collars and cuffs of linen under-shirts and chemises, which became increasingly visible and sophisticated during the 16th century. From the beginning lace was associated with wealth and status and it remained so until the early 1800s. Fine fashion lace was always expensive and although this reflected the time it took to make and the cost of the hand-spun thread (weight for weight, more than gold) the lace merchants, not the makers, were the ones who made the money.

At times in history the wearing of lace was frowned upon or legislated against for its frivolity and extravagance. During the 1600s, when men wore more lace than women, many are on record as mortgaging, or even selling property outright to raise money for the latest lace fashion. Collective spending on Venetian lace and other luxury fashion goods almost bankrupted France at this time and seriously dented the economies of other countries.

Out of this incredible history came some of the most exquisite textiles ever produced; laces so fine and intricate it is hard to believe that they were made by hand. Its intrinsic and artistic value has ensured the survival of large quantities of lace in museums and private collections around the world. Although traditional needle and bobbin-lace techniques are still practised today, by the end of the 1800s most fashion lace was made by machine.

Today, if you ask someone to explain or define lace the most likely description will focus on the solid motif before mention is made of the spaces between; even dictionaries do not acknowledge that without the spaces there would be no lace. Despite enormous changes in fashion and technology, today's lace has not changed much, conceptually, in 500 years. The all-over pattern may predominate over compositions of different elements, but the motifs are still mostly floral and often straight copies from historic designs. In view of radical changes in the design of almost every other artefact in our lives it is surprising that fashion lace remains fixed in the past, as if it were too 'sacred' an icon with which to tamper.

In other contexts lace has moved on. Early last century in Eastern Europe, particularly Czechoslovakia, traditional bobbin-lacemakers were encouraged to re-develop their skills as a means of self-expression. They began with wall panels which drew on folk legends, and pictorial subjects and progressed to abstract wall panels and 3-dimensional sculptural pieces. By degrees their work transcended the traditional techniques to become as valid a medium of artistic expression as any other.

Lacemakers elsewhere in Europe have not been as ready to re-think their work. Those who still work with bobbins, or needle and thread, are generally more interested in reproducing the past than searching for new expressions. I suspect that the reason for this can be found in the enormous reverence for 'old' lace that still exists among today's lacemakers, who believe that without its nostalgic references to the past lace would have no appeal.

The Powerhouse Museum International Lace for Fashion Award was initiated to encourage a completely different look at lace --- and fashion lace in particular. The idiosyncratic definition focuses on the fabric rather than the way it is made. This was intended to interest textile artists working in a wide variety of media, while not excluding those who work traditionally. We were excited by the response to the first award in 1998, and even more so by the 2001 entries. Planning to select up to 30 finalists from the 150 entries, the standard was such that we eventually chose 42.

About half of the finalists use traditional lacemaking techniques, especially bobbin-lace, in a new way and with new materials. The entries from the Czech Republic and Slovakia are particularly inspiring; they show the kind of innovation seen in the art lace of these countries for almost a century, incorporated into fashion.

The remaining entries use a variety of new techniques. Most prevalent is the use of machine embroidery over a soluble base fabric. Although this technique is a relatively new studio practice it has an industrial history that began with the Schiffli embroidery machine in Switzerland in the 1880s. The design was embroidered in cotton on a silk base that was later dissolved away with acid. This potentially toxic process resulted in what was known then as 'chemical' lace, and later 'guipure'. By degrees the process became more benign, until eventually a water-soluble base-fabric was invented. By the late 1970s, the sophistication of the domestic sewing machine and the ready availability of this fabric led to a new studio art form that is now producing some very interesting work. It is not quick but has the potential to produce prototype designs which may then be reproduced by machines and earn the designers a reasonable return for their work.

The Powerhouse Museum International Lace for Fashion Award seeks to promote discussion about the nature of lace, and of fashion; to raise questions in the minds of viewers, but to refrain from giving answers.

The International Lace for Fashion Award promotes the making of lace using new materials and techniques. The Museum has been collecting lace for over a century and has one of the best collections in Australia. It also has a renowned reference collection in its Lace Study Centre.

The Powerhouse Museum International Lace for Fashion Award was open to lacemakers, designers, textile artists and tertiary students. The forty-two finalists on display have been selected from over one hundred entries from around the world.

J U D G I N G T H E A W A R D

The Powerhouse Museum 2nd International Lace for Fashion Award aims to:

- encourage the creation of contemporary lace of exceptional quality
- redefine the traditional expression of lacemaking in relation to fashion
- promote innovation in the use of materials and techniques to produce a new generation of lace with outstanding visual impact.

Work was judged on its fashion relevance, originality and innovation in design, use of materials and technique.

For the purpose of the award we define lace as: 'a decorative openwork fabric in which the pattern of spaces is as important as the solid areas'.

Both traditional and non-traditional techniques were accepted.

The judges were impressed by the high standard of entries submitted and by the variety of the work.

The judges were:

Alison Veness McGourty

Editor-in-Chief, Harper's Bazaar Australia

Jane de Teliga

Style Director, Australian Women's Weekly

Jennifer Sanders

Deputy Director, Powerhouse Museum

Rosemary Shepherd, OAM

Lace Specialist, Powerhouse Museum

'Every cloud has a silver lining' top
by Abhilisha Bahl, student
National Institute of Fashion Technology,
Bangalore, India

'This garment is based on the idea that every cloud
has a silver lining, the hope that at the end of the
tunnel there's always light.'

Crocheted nylon cord and drawn-thread embroidery on synthetic
organza.



'Portrait 2000' face veil
by Marian Bijlenga, textile artist
Landsmeer, the Netherlands

'I portrayed myself in front of a mirror, trying to make a drawing on the surface of the mirror. In doing so my face moved; left eye became right eye; several faces came together in one image. I translated this drawing in horsehair, the material I usually work with, which has traditional applications in cloth making.'

Horsehair machine-embroidered into place with clear nylon monofilament.



'Magnetite' helmet

by Gill Bird, lacemaker and embroiderer
Swadlincote, Derby, United Kingdom

'This piece was born of my interest and research into pre-history. Magnetite is iron oxide, a natural magnet, first associated with the Iron Age. Its crystals are cubic and its magnetic field looks rather like the structure of the lace in my helmet.

'The helmet's front and rear curves were inspired by the headgear of a Praetorian Guard in the Roman military.'

Bobbin-lace technique and cotton thread with beads and wire incorporated during the making process.



'Spring thaw' scarf

by Helen Bobisud, hand weaver

Moscow, Idaho, USA

'Lace is very much about contrasts with its emphasis on the interplay of positive and negative space. I wanted to have large open spaces so I needed a stabilising factor to surround them.

Previously I had used a lightly felted wool lattice filled with silk. In this piece I replace some of the silk with smooth rayon which I removed after the wool was felted. The fabric is reminiscent of that rather ragged time of the year when patches of bare ground are visible amongst hillocks of snow.'

Hand-woven from wool and silk and rayon, the rayon is removed after felting.



'Amphii' series finger sleeves

by Sandra L Brown, jeweller and ceramicist

Northmead, New South Wales, Australia

'The "Amphii" series are small crocheted vessels or sleeves which are worn on the fingers. The curvaceous and pod-like sleeves evoke shapes which depend on the way they are worn: over the whole finger, or bunched up tightly at the base or tip. The open lacework of the sleeve allows the viewer to see the finger. Silver and porcelain both have a preciousness that makes them sensuous to work with and look at.'

Crocheted sterling-silver wire and silver or porcelain rings.



'Turn someone's head' headpiece
by Anita Dajcar-Florin, lacemaker
Bad-Ragaz, Switzerland

'I was inspired by illustrations of headdresses from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and also by national costumes from Brittany and Croatia. I used the turban as a model and made a "ribbon" with continuous repeats of the one lace pattern.

I wanted it to be easy to store, wearable in various ways, adjustable in size and almost invisible on the head. My final attempt, after a lot of trial and error, is what I had envisaged — a pure horsehair lace with the beauty of the natural material in its transparency and the charming overlaps.'

Bobbin-lace technique using horsehair.



'Rotation' II neckpiece
by Maria Danielova, lacemaker
Prague, Czech Republic

HIGHLY COMMENDED

'My neckpieces are designed to fasten by
weaving the ends through each other.'

Bobbin-lace technique using flax and cotton thread.



'Electro-babe' dress

by Rebecca Davey, textile artist
Dianella, Western Australia

2ND RUNNER-UP

category 1 — worldwide professional or
amateur

'I have drawn my inspiration for the dress from discarded electric circuit boards and electronic components. I chose pink to reflect current fashion trends and silver as a reference to society's preoccupation with technology.'

Machine-embroidery using rayon, poly-cotton and metallic thread.



'Paper-lace kimono II' (detail)
by Colleen Drew, paper artist
Connells Point, New South Wales,
Australia

'Paper owes its life to the four elements. Nurtured in the earth, the New Zealand flax plants, of which the paper in this garment is made, were harvested and boiled. Traditionally this is done on an open fire using wood ash, but in this instance I used an electric copper. The flax fibres were then beaten to a fine pulp and dispersed in water, then drawn from the water with a large screen. The lace patterning was produced by showering water from a hose onto the screen while the paper was still wet. The fine paper inside the coat was lifted from the screen by the wind while drying, thus producing an uneven filmy surface.'

Paper handmade from New Zealand flax.



"Shiro Kuro' man's shirt

by Anne Farren, textile and fashion artist,
and designer

Ardross, Western Australia

'In this work I have tried to create a garment which redefines lace for men. I have used a simple traditional lace structure to create a geometric pattern.'

'Fused' silk, machine-embroidered with rayon thread.



'Scales' collar

by Silvia Fedorova, textile artist, lacemaker
and gallery owner

Bratislava, Slovakia

'My intention was to create some extraordinary accessories using ordinary everyday materials. Copper wire makes the soft amorphous plastic material solid and shapeable, with a shiny surface.'

Bobbin-lace technique using copper wire and strips of recycled plastic.



'Night' dress

by Pallavi Gaur, student

National Institute of Fashion Technology,
Bangalore, India

'I have tried to depict the darkness of night and the twinkling of stars. Night gives us a soft but bold feeling and that is what I want people to feel when they see this garment.'

Crochet using nylon cord, embellished with silver thread and button rings.



'Shimmer' top

by Shruti Gupta, student

National Institute of Fashion Technology,
Bangalore, India

'My inspiration was the brilliance and shape of diamonds, which I have represented with silver and glass beads, threaded on transparent nylon so that the twisting and knotting is almost invisible. Extra weight and form has been added to the hemline by threading the beads onto tinned copper wire.

My creation may be worn over a sleeved garment or bare skin.'

Macramé and twisting, silver and glass beads on transparent nylon thread and tinned copper wire.



'Sea-side dolly pink'
by Alvena Hall, textile artist
West Lakes, South Australia

The sea-side dollies are inspired by 1950s party dresses and the kewpi-dolls on sticks which are sold at fairs, especially the one at Semaphore (an Adelaide suburb). I also had in mind the notion of a teenage apprentice siren, developing her skills of seduction at such a fair.'

Machine-embroidery over water-soluble ground; embroidered net appliqué and cutwork; nylon, silk, cotton and rayon.



'Revelation' and 'Concealment' neck pieces
by Victoria Hills, design student
College of Fine Arts, University of New
South Wales
Turrumurra, New South Wales, Australia

'Lace and words are both used to conceal and reveal. Lace is used to cover the body; to conceal. But this lace collar also draws attention to, and reveals, the body below. In this same way, words can either reveal who we are or conceal what we really feel. Clear and black fishing line in the scarf represents revelation and concealment. The black line hides the body; the transparent squares have overlapping words which are unreadable. The transparent fishing line reveals the body and the squares depict readable words.'

Knitted fishing line with squares of transparency sewn on; made in two pieces.



'Kettenhemd 1' coat
by Waltraud Janzen, textile artist
Kempten, Germany

'I intended this to be an art-to-wear object like a
translucent body sculpture.'

Free crochet technique using patinated brass wire.



'Grid' dress

by Elly Joel, textile artist

White Gum Valley, Western Australia

OVERALL WINNER

category 1 — worldwide professional or amateur

'The fabric is made of hand-torn squares of shapewell interfacing, with a smaller square cut from the middle of each. The squares are joined by a grid of machine-stitched lines to form a reconstructed fabric to be used on the bias. The dress is a one-off piece, cut from this fabric. Although delicate-looking, the fabric is quite strong and can be gently hand-washed and ironed.'

Cotton interfacing and thread.



'Simplicity' cap and neck piece
by Bożena Kaluga, textile artist
Łódź, Poland

'My work is created from an original combination of
knitting and collage. I use thread, form and colour
to make architectonic constructions and details.'

Knitted threads, painted and moulded.



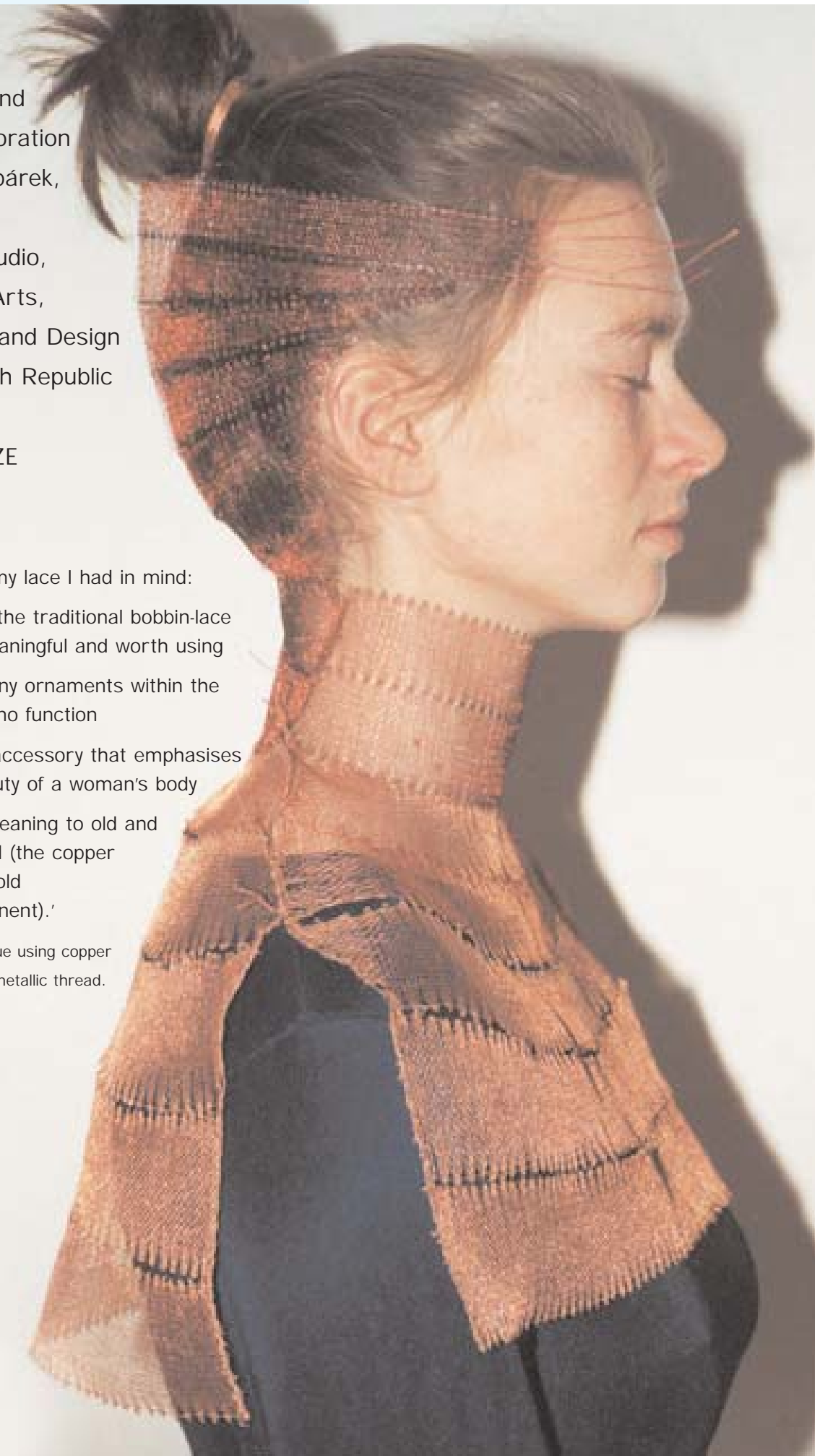
Head, neck and
shoulder decoration
by Pavel Kaspárek,
student
Textile Art Studio,
Academy of Arts,
Architecture and Design
Prague, Czech Republic

SPECIAL PRIZE
category 1

'When making my lace I had in mind:

- to prove that the traditional bobbin-lace technique is meaningful and worth using
- to get rid of any ornaments within the work that have no function
- to create an accessory that emphasises the natural beauty of a woman's body
- to give new meaning to old and useless material (the copper was part of an old machine component).'

Bobbin-lace technique using copper wire and synthetic metallic thread.



'Pretty in pink' ballgown

by Lang Leav, design student

College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales

'In designing my gown I looked at fashion in relation to colour and how colour can determine the context of a garment. I also looked at fashion

forecasting, and how colours change from season to season. Pink seems to be the 'in' colour now.

My ballgown is essentially a celebration of pink. I used an origami art form to make small ornaments, in which spaces are created as the components are linked together. On realising the relevance of this to contemporary lace I adapted it from paper to fabric.'

Origami technique using nylon net and fastened with fine string.



'Kimono' (detail)

by Linda Lewis, textile artist
Tempe, Arizona, USA

' "Kimono" is made from photocopied pages of a Japanese-English dictionary. I machine-stitched a small grid over the surface, then wet and scrubbed the resulting fabric which casts a shadow onto adjacent surfaces and shifts and rustles in air currents.

Books are a manifestation of ideas. As an artist I enter into the dialogue by deconstructing their text physically and figuratively. While remnants of the original words remain, the fabric has been transformed and something new has emerged.'

Paper, machine-stitching and discharge paste printing on rayon.



'Flywire' wrap (detail)

by Sarah Maris, textile artist

Toongabbie, New South Wales, Australia

'The inspiration for this work came from man-made or industrial meshes such as flyscreen and chicken wire. I manipulated a sheer fabric in various ways and found the most exciting effect was produced by using fire. The resulting 'lace' is very tactile.

I stitched three layers of fabric together in a grid formation, then held the fabric over a candle, burning a hole in each of the grids. The completed piece was restitched to reinforce fragile areas.'

Synthetic fabric stitched with nylon monofilament and selectively burnt.



Lace raincoat

by Halka Maršáková, student
Academy of Art, Architecture and Design
Prague, Czech Republic

SPECIAL PRIZE category 1

'I am interested in contrasting and connecting unrelated subjects, and exaggerating some of these connections.

In this work I applied a traditional lace pattern to a piece of clothing to deny its original use. I was amused at connecting something noble and elaborate with something so ordinary. As accessories for the raincoat I chose protective rubber gloves which I changed in the same way, evoking something elegant as well as disabling their original purpose.'

Plastic fabric with a cut-out lace design.



'Portia's flowers' dress (detail)
by Janie Matthews, textile artist
Darlington, Western Australia

'For centuries lace has been made, meticulously and laboriously, by amateurs and professionals alike. Whether made for a celebration or ceremonial event, as an act of love or for the

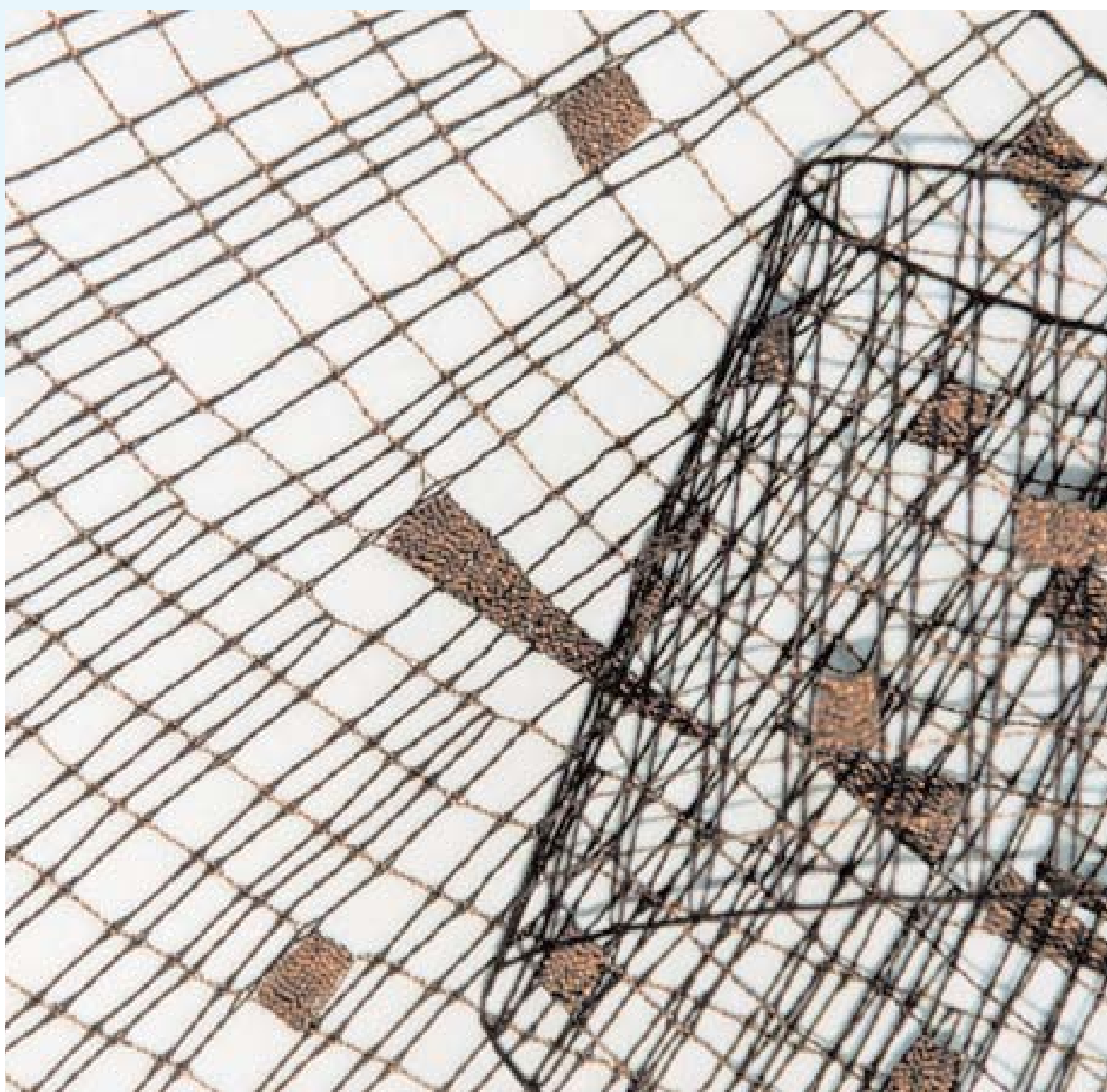
maker's livelihood, it can be flamboyant or decorous, floral or geometric but always detailed and intricate. I aim to create a lace which reflects some of the traditions of lacemaking but with a contemporary aspect. To this end I have combined strong colours and bold floral design with a synthetic, viscose-polyester blend base fabric and polyester thread.'

Machine-embroidery, cut and drawn thread work.



Scarf or collar (detail)
by Ellen Meyer, lace artist
Lübeck, Germany

Bobbin-lace technique, silk and metallic thread.



'Body-body' leotard

by Patricia Michell, illustrator, weaver,
lacemaker and embroiderer

Adelaide, South Australia

1ST RUNNER-UP

category 1 — worldwide professional
or amateur

'I am a recent convert to Limerick lace
(embroidered net) so I'm using a traditional
technique in a non-traditional way, with some
modern materials.'

Embroidery on stretch net with silk and
machine-washable wool.



'Green field A' skirt and waistcoat
by Noriko Narahira, textile artist
Kyoto, Japan

'Nature is the main inspiration for my work. I have also been influenced by the traditional Japanese colours of kimono, and the way in which the front and reverse are often in strong contrast. The challenge is to control such difficult combinations to produce a balanced and pleasing effect. Some images of lace are 'fine', 'delicate', 'white', 'elegant', and 'graceful', but I like my work to have a more casual feel.'

Wool-felt with cut-out spaces and machine embroidery with polyester thread.



'Magic' skirt and top

by Katrina O'Loughlin, design student
College of Fine Arts, University of New
South Wales, Sydney, Australia

If a product can be made of recyclable goods, I consider it a success. I found I could create interesting lace-like effects, pleasing to the eye and pleasant to touch, by melting certain plastics with an iron.

By ironing crumpled pieces of clingwrap onto a flat clingwrap backing, I made a fun, lively, feminine skirt reminiscent of a fairy's tutu. The cross-back top was made from plastic shopping bags, the stronger material working well with a single overlay. The black underlay emphasises the spaces within the fabric.

Synthetic gold thread melted into clingwrap and shopping bags.



'Maze, a search' dress and stole (detail)

by Yogesh Purohit, fashion and textile designer

Mumbai, India

'Leaping forward into the era of space colonisation, gene manipulation, human cloning — our urge to stretch the boundaries of existence is never-ending. We observe, manipulate and invent. My creation, "Maze", is an experimental lace that is sensuously feminine, delicately sheer and crafted from a modern synthetic material, totally removed from traditional thread.'

Synthetic gum manipulated with a hot glue gun and embellished with lurex thread and lurex dust.



'Coffee' bustier

by Shweta Rao, student

National Institute of Fashion Technology,
Bangalore, India

'My inspiration was coffee, the universal 'refresher', and coffee beans. I enjoyed experimenting with lycra. I added the beads to counteract the monotony of the lycra and create the coffee bean effect.'

Crochet and circular braiding using synthetic cord, dyed lycra and beads.



'Venus Ventura'

by Rashmi. N, student

National Institute of Fashion Technology,
Bangalore, India

'I was inspired by electronics, without which life today is unthinkable. I started by exploring the materials relating to electronics and found wire the most interesting of all as it is delicate, tactile, malleable and lustrous. Best of all, it created interesting shapes and movements. I associate all these qualities with lace. I used capacitors for surface decoration because their interesting form complements my design. Usually hairpin lace is used lengthwise but I have broken with convention by giving it a circular form.'

Hairpin and conventional crochet using coated-copper computer wire and capacitors.



'Dreaming of Shibori II' jacket
by Barbara Schey, weaver
Thornleigh, New South Wales, Australia

'The technique of weaving the hand-reeled silk direct from the cocoon and applying gold leaf, evolved from my travels in Thailand and from observing the Buddhist custom of applying gold leaf to "make merit".'

Weaving using sericin silk and embellished with applied gold leaf.



'Hand vessel'

by Petra Schmidtmayerova, student
Academy of Art Architecture and Design
Prague, Czech Republic

'My accessory is inspired by the fashion of a previous age but it has a new function. It's something for hands or to wear on hands, a lace muff or bag, decorative rather than practical.'

Circular looping with stainless-steel wire.



'Entrapment of ocean' cap
by Nikhil Sharma, student
National Institute of Fashion Technology,
Bangalore, India

'The tranquillity, serenity and beauty of nature is gradually being destroyed by the human race. The once bountiful ocean is being transformed into a lifeless body of water, stripped of its rich resources. My hat is symbolic of this selfishness. It is like a fish net and the hair protruding from the opening is like a whale's fin as it struggles for freedom. I enjoyed working with copper wire; it helped me break away from the delicacy of conventional lacemaking yarns.'

Crocheted copper wire.



'Raindrops' necklace

by Lenka Suchanek, artist lacemaker
Vancouver, Canada

'These pieces were inspired by my environment: magnificent north-west Pacific rainforest. The pieces combine materials used in Renaissance lace (silver and gemstones) with an 18th-century transparent point ground pattern.

The cool touch of crystal beads and the intriguing transparency of wire lace make these body ornaments equally sensual for wearer and viewer.'

Bobbin-lace technique using oxidised silver wire and quartz crystal beads.



'Sehaliah' bag (from set of top and bag)
by Gloria Valli, artist lacemaker
Verona, Italy

'The simple rectangular shapes in these pieces
were constructed of plaiting and picots, using only
two pairs of bobbins. Being made of wire they can
be moulded to the body.'

Bobbin-lace technique using red and blue coated copper wire.



Handbag

by Tereza Veprková, student

Academy of Art, Architecture and Design

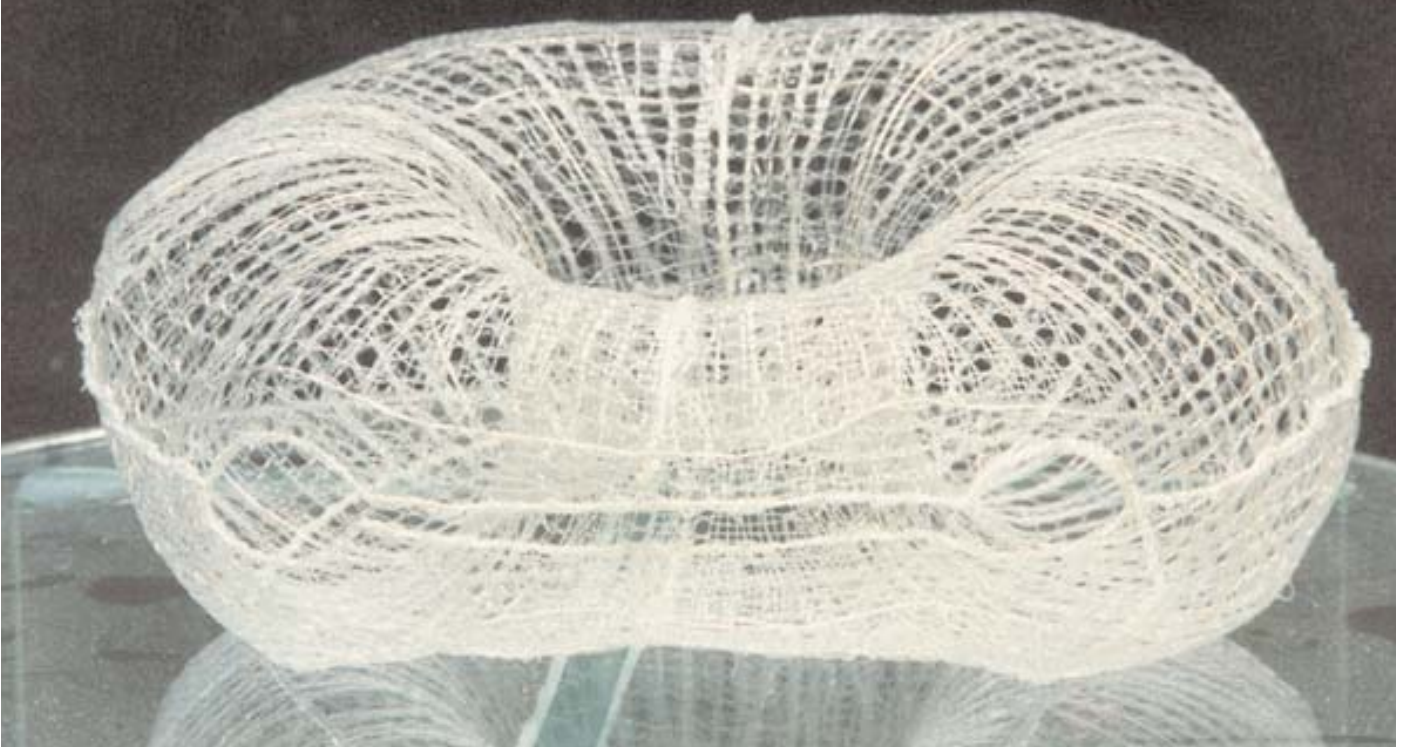
Prague, Czech Republic

SPECIAL PRIZE

category 1

'Thinking about contemporary lace fashion accessories I decided to make "skeletal" bags that would reveal the wearer's personality. The bags keep their form because of the materials I have used.'

Bobbin-lace lace technique using nylon monofilament and stainless steel wire.



'Button-lace halter top'

by Lena Wegenaar, design student

College of Fine Arts, University of New
South Wales, Sydney Australia

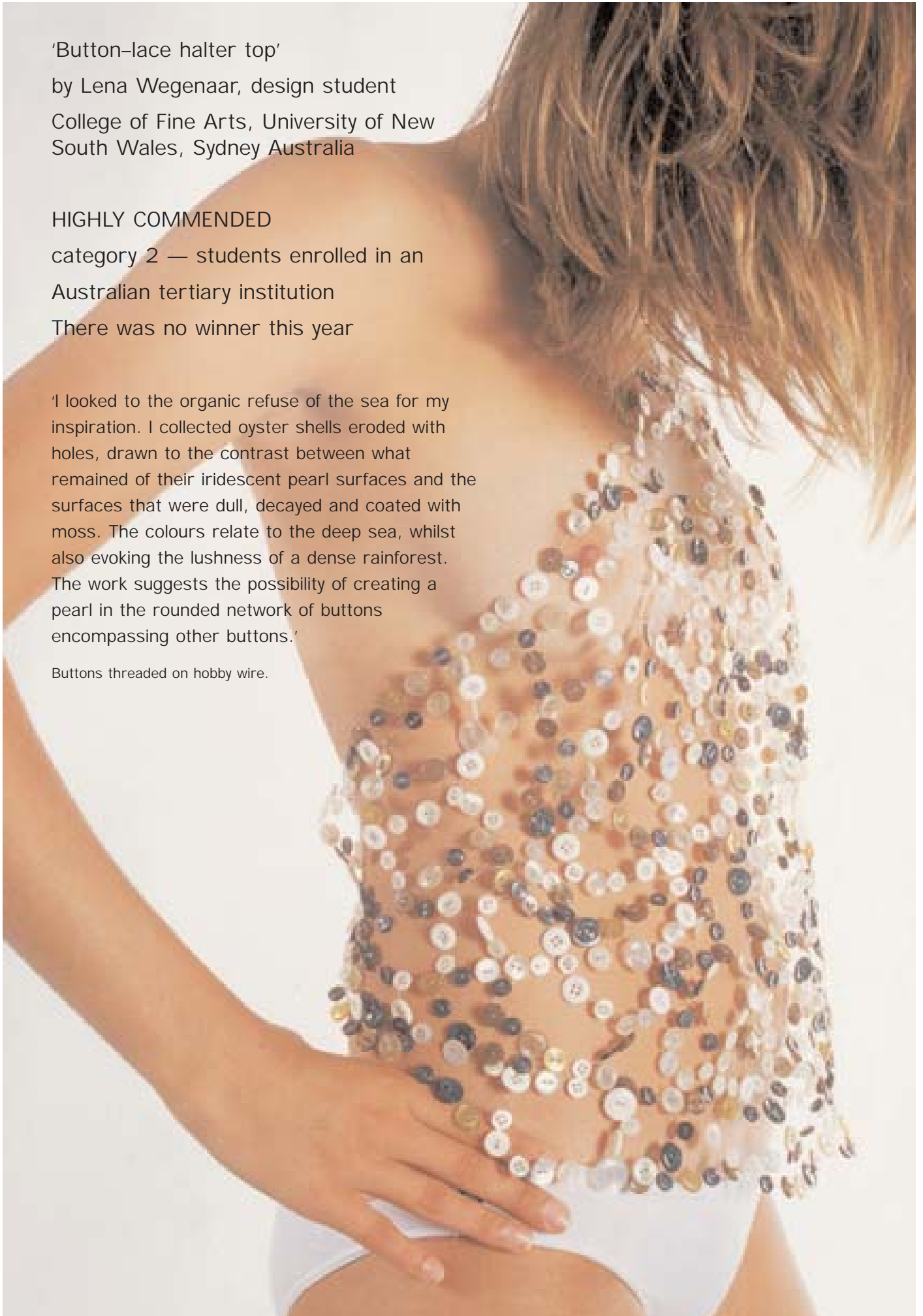
HIGHLY COMMENDED

category 2 — students enrolled in an
Australian tertiary institution

There was no winner this year

'I looked to the organic refuse of the sea for my inspiration. I collected oyster shells eroded with holes, drawn to the contrast between what remained of their iridescent pearl surfaces and the surfaces that were dull, decayed and coated with moss. The colours relate to the deep sea, whilst also evoking the lushness of a dense rainforest. The work suggests the possibility of creating a pearl in the rounded network of buttons encompassing other buttons.'

Buttons threaded on hobby wire.



'Untitled' bodice (detail)
by Ann Wheeler, artist lacemaker
Southampton, England

'As a lacemaker I believe passionately that my generation should create something new and not just rest on tradition. As a teacher I try to encourage experimentation. My work combines needle-lace with handmade paper and plastics to construct three-dimensional sculptural pieces.

Due to time constraints I tend to use a machine for much of my embroidery work. I enjoy the challenge of working to a theme and turning designs into textiles.'

Needle-lace and machine-embroidery on a soluble background combined with plastic packaging, sheer fabric, threads, beads and washers.



"Arthropoda" dress

by Kath Wilkinson, textile artist

Medlow Bath, New South Wales, Australia

'I wanted to create an exquisite dress that will cause some to shudder, on close inspection. This work is partly a statement against human tendencies to endow animals with either good or bad traits as they perceive the animal's role in relation to themselves rather than as part of the greater scheme of things. This work is also informed by the fairy tales I read as a child which inspired me to try to stitch dolls clothes from rose petals and dead insect wings.'

Free machine-embroidery using rayon polyester and metallic threads.



'Captivating coral' shift dress

by Wendy Wright, textile artist and fashion designer

Coalfalls, Queensland, Australia

'This wearable ensemble is based on coral and effervescent water (the surge of water around rocky outcrops of coral).

In some instances three threads have been used together, two cotton and one metallic silver, with a single cotton bobbin-thread. I chose white cotton because I had intended to gradation dye the garment when the lace was finished. However, I liked the combination of white and silver so much I left it as it was, just adding beads.'

Machine-embroidery using cotton and metallic thread; silk roll (rouleau) trim.

