

STITCHED STORIES & WELLBEING

IN
CONVERSATION
WITH THE
PLANET

E-BOOK

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Introduction

This project is a response to a call from [Season for Change](#) to use our individual & collective artistic voices to speak about how climate change has affected us. Season for Change is a 'A UK-wide cultural programme inspiring urgent and inclusive action on climate change. Season for Change showcases the creativity and leadership of the UK's cultural sector on the most important issue of our time – the climate crisis.' Stitched Stories & Wellbeing responded to the call as part of their Stitching Festival in May 2021. We launched a #slowsummerstitch project that became a conversation between our own wellbeing and that of the planet. The pandemic has showed us all how vulnerable, as a species, we are and shone a light on how much better the planet has done when human damage was lessened. This has been an historic moment in time and, perhaps, given us our biggest wake up call yet.

Our #slowsummerstitch project involved fabric panels measuring 24x14 inches. The aim was to stitch 'slowly' during the summer months creating our own climate change narrative one stitch at a time. Slow stitching is a world wide movement that speaks of the need to slow down our stitching practice and stay in the moment, allowing stitch to calm and still our minds. So, the technique was perfect for this project. We hoped we would gain from the process while others would gain from the outcome. To us, the slow process was capable of teaching us a great deal about the state of our own pandemic while giving us time and space to think carefully about how climate change has affected us personally.

This group of stitchers is a small collection of folk within our larger, Stitched Stories & Wellbeing, community arts project. This project began in November 2018 with a small group of locals living on the Isle of Arran off the west coast of Scotland. The island is a beautiful place to live but the winters are long and dark so a group decided to stitch their way through 2019 one postcard at a time aiming for 52 postcards. The project quickly jumped the water to West Kilbride and from there it grew wings and is now in 26 countries around the world with thousands of people stitching away. We connect through our [website](#), [facebook](#) and [instagram](#) accounts.



Our #slowsummerstitch project was supported by monthly zoom stitching cafes where we could catch up with each other and share our findings. During the course of this project we have become a tight knit group and that, in itself, is an interesting finding. We have all found the process challenging emotionally so supporting each other has been a vital part of the journey. We had a facebook group where we could share our work as well.



In progress, Sarah Blakely

In progress, Claire Phillips



Sketchbook, Fiona Doubleday

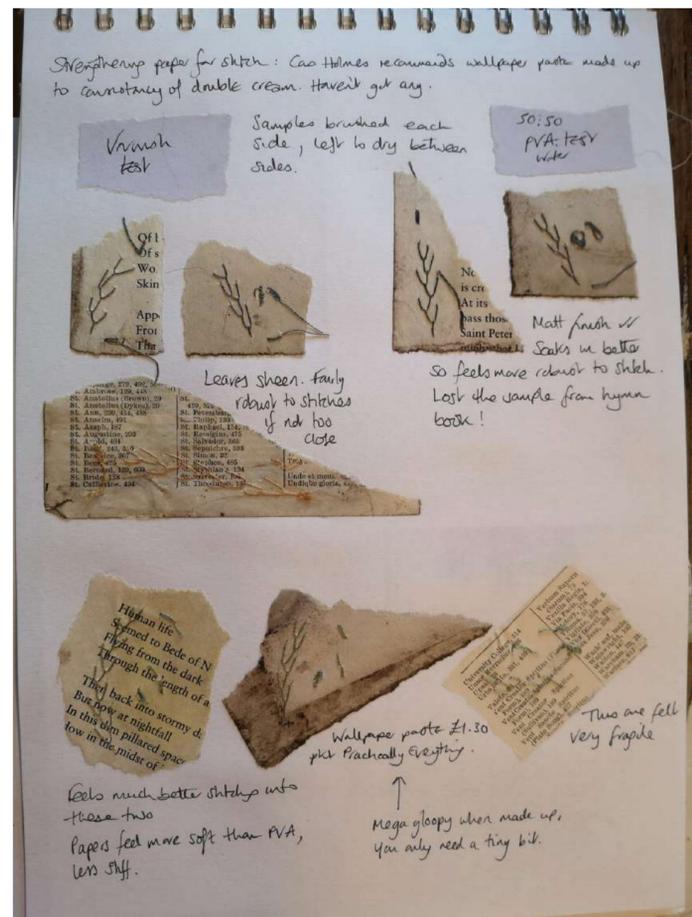


Sketchbooks and Work-in-Progress

Some members kept sketchbooks or journals throughout their creative processes.



Sketchbook, Fiona Doubleday



Sketchbook, Charlotte Treglown



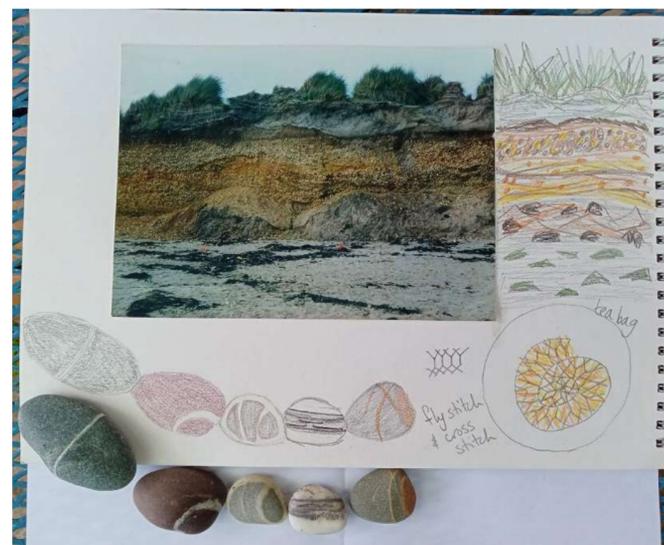
Sketchbook, Emma Siede-Collins



Gathering, Charlotte Treglown



Sketchbook, Claire Phillips



Sketchbook, Sarah Blakeley



Sketchbook, Ton Redvers



Sketchbooks helped us to think through emerging ideas and test out designs.

We were also able to share our work-in-progress.



Sketchbook, Judy Payne



Work-in-progress- Sarah Blakeley



Work-in-progress- Ton Redvers



Work-in-progress- Elizabeth Carlsson



Work-in-progress- Phillippa Ward

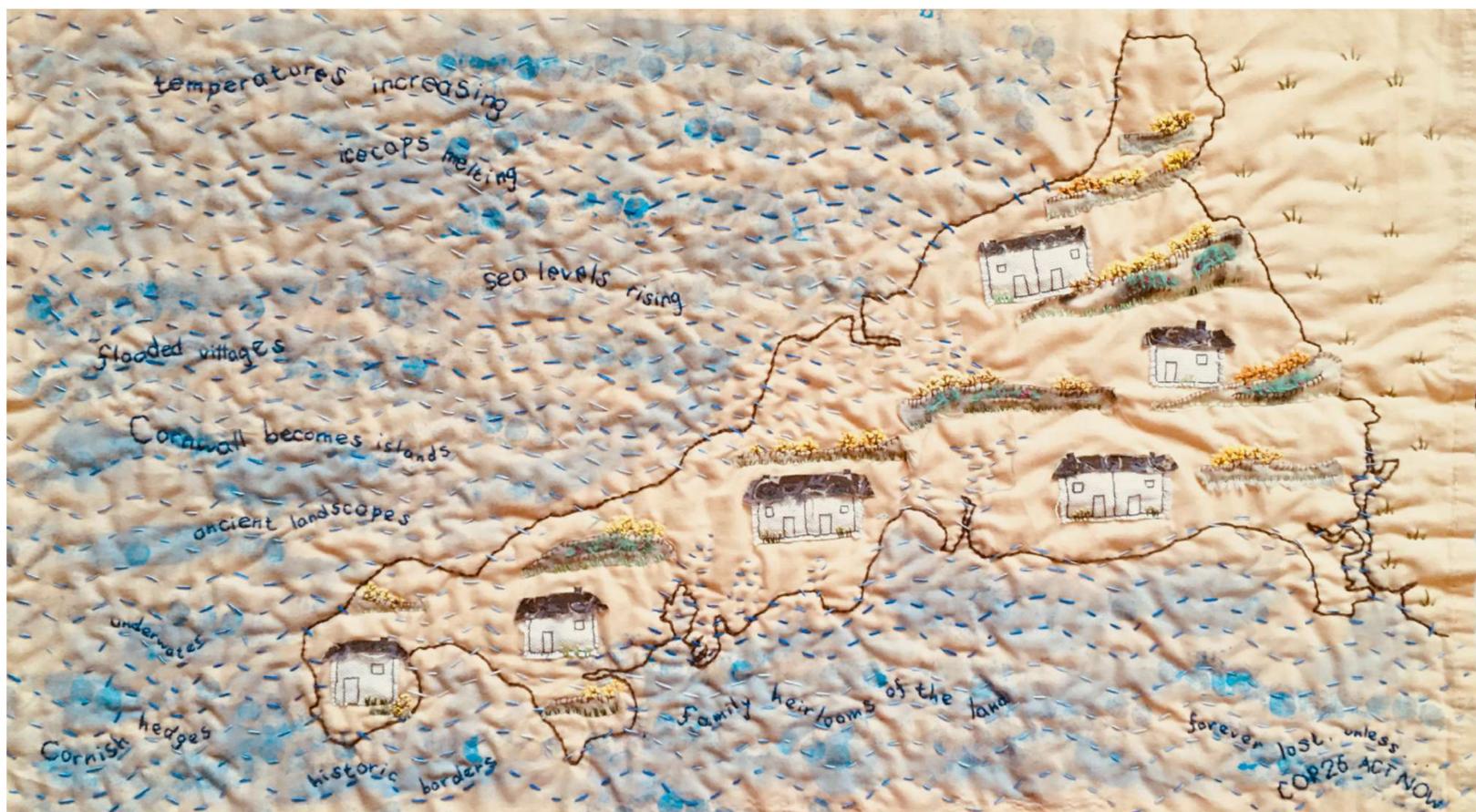
The Stitched Panels



Sarah Blakeley

Eroded Earth -

There is a hope that given time, nature will find a way to heal.



Judy Payne

Disappearing Cornwall -

As temperatures increase, ice caps melt and sea levels rise - what will become of the landscapes we know and love?



Ton Redvers, Fareham
Deforestation Reimagined - Exploring the alternatives.



Fiona Doubleday, Isle of Arran
Forest Fires - If trees could talk what would they say?



Coral Smith, Isle of Arran

Storms, Gales, Rising Sea Levels - Over 10 million people worldwide would be affected by just a ½ metre rise in sea levels.



Carolyn Joan Ferris, Ontario Canada

Coral Reef Relief

Coral Reefs are dying...pollution, rising ocean temperatures and human activities are causing this... we need to take action to slow this destruction.



Phillippa Ward, Hereford
Drought - A tear in the fabric of humanity.



Elizabeth Carlsson Linköping, Sweden
The Big Thaw - Who will remember the sound of melting ice?



Emma Siedle-Collins

Sea Change - Water - 70% of our planet, 70% of our body, 100% of our future -
reducing pollution to return the vitality to our oceans



Ailish Scanlon

The folly of Christmas present; the holly of Christmas future.



Claire Phillips
Coastal Erosion - Where there is erosion, I long for cohesion.



THE TIME IS NOW

Let's hear from the artists

We asked the artists some key questions about both their processes and their outcomes and this is what they had to say -

Why did these folk join the #slowsummerstitch project? Some members share their reasons -

Fiona Doubleday

I co-ordinate Stitched Stories & Wellbeing and I responded to the call for action from the [Season for Change](#) group. With [#cop26](#) coming to Glasgow I felt we had a unique opportunity to use the 'language of stitch' to communicate how climate change is affecting us. I then put an open call out to my own community and some ladies joined me in this project. I am recognised as a sustainable artist by [Creative Carbon Scotland](#) and I take my ambassadorial role very seriously. This project spoke to me deeply from the start as a way of using stitch to illustrate a conversation between my own wellbeing and that of the planet. We are not separate beings. We are part of the natural world but no other species has done the damage that we have. It is time to speak very loudly indeed with a call for change.

Catriona Mason

I love hand stitching and upcycling fabric. It seemed a perfect project to tell the story of how I feel about the amount of textile waste in the world.

Charlotte Treglown

Because of the impact of the textile industry on the environment I've not bought any new garments or fabric for, I estimate, five years or more. This seems like a silent protest, so stitching my piece gave that protest some voice.

Coral Smith

I joined the slow stitching project because I thought it was important to be able to show that many of us are very concerned about climate change.

Elizabeth Carlsson

I find the climate theme very important.

Claire Phillips

I love being part of a community project and find it fascinating seeing how other creatives approach similar topics in many different ways. I find hand stitching rewarding in itself and love working on longer term projects that develop over time

Carolyn Joan Ferris

A friend told me about it, and I thought it sounded like a good challenge that would suit my skills.

Ton Redvers

The slow stitch project brought together my desire to challenge myself as a textile artist at the same time as I was reading more about the destruction of our global forests. It seemed a perfect opportunity to use the subject of deforestation in the slow stitch project.

Sarah Blakeley

I live with depression and I use stitching and walking as a mindful way of managing it, so the theme of wellbeing in this project really spoke to me. I felt that this was a great way to show how my own wellbeing is linked with nature and the changes in the environment. This slow stitch project has really helped me focus and challenged me to stitch every day and in most cases by hand which I haven't done for quite a long time.

Judy Payne

I felt it was a great chance to share our stories about the issues around climate change which concern us, and I was pleased to be given an opportunity to create a stitched textile piece for an exhibition which could help raise awareness and highlight these issues.

Ailish Scanlon

This is the perfect project to be creative while demonstrating what climate change means to me. Also, I never throw out wool so I now have thousands of small balls- too small to use elsewhere. I even have gold and silver wool leftover from a jumper I knitted in Paris as an AuPair in 1985.

Emma Siedle-Collins

Being part of a virtual stitching group during lockdown was a great comfort, giving a focus to my own work at the same time as enjoying others'. Joining in with the slow stitching project was a natural progression and a chance to make a comment on what is happening all over the world but more importantly, right outside my own front door.



Has this project spoken to your wellbeing and if so how?

Phillippa Ward

By nature I am a solitary type of person happy in my own company. This project has heightened my awareness of how others as well as myself are and have been impacted by our chosen subject matter. Wellbeing -my wellbeing has been relegated to the back burner for quite awhile ... My Well of Being is at at drought level. This project gave to me quiet hours of ME time, a few hours throughout the months wherein I could reclaim some of myself. It has been a small step within healing my personal grief at losing my Mother and our family home being sold. The project put into perspective the process of change, it brought forward how change can happen in the twinkling of an eye or be a long drawn out process or both at the same time. Something that happens to us all whether we like it or not. For all that I am a solitary kind of being my Well of Being is interconnected with others. There has been, for me, a lot of peace and loss within my hours also growth and healing and a broader understanding of myself and my needs.

Elizabeth Carlsson

When you witness something that is irreversible then a deep sorrow arises inside you. You feel powerless and frustrated. This is how I felt this summer, when I heard about rapid melting of Arctic ice. Acceptance and coping was my solution. Working with stitched narratives meant a lot in this process. Hand stitching is a very slow process so when you stitch your breathing slows down and you are in the moment. At the same time there is a symbolic level. Stitching is like mending - you mend yourself and a wounded world. Our zoom meetings have a very important role. They give inspiration, comfort and encouragement.

Coral Smith

I find that stitching is always good for my equilibrium, though with this particular project, it does bring home to me how my life would be affected if sea levels rose here even by low levels.

Sarah Blakeley

This project came along just at the right time for me, I was feeling completely lost and drained after months of self isolation, lockdown and home schooling. I had stopped stitching and had withdrawn into myself. Having something to focus on and making time for myself, by stitching every day for about half an hour has been wonderful and really helped with my wellbeing. During the first wave of lockdowns last year there were some wonderful reports being shared of the changes in nature, because human interactions were being restricted and this does bring some glimpse of hope for the future.

Ton Redvers

I love people and being around people, creating, bouncing ideas, learning from each other. Lockdown, working from home, and being distanced from my family and my work colleagues, negatively affected my mental health. This in turn affected my physicality and I felt a real disconnect between my body and soul. This project was part of a jigsaw that helped me, piece by piece, to reconnect with myself. Slowing down, focussing on each panel, moving from destruction to growth mirrored my own journey. The work really did help to improve my wellbeing and linked me with some gorgeous women who are creative and real.

Ailish Scanlon

It's probably a bit early for me to answer this as I only recently joined. However, so far the project has spoken to my wellbeing I feel connected to the group and have benefited from the group's energy and positivity.

Judy Payne

Stitching has a real therapeutic value for me. This project has given me time to think about how I want to take my stitching practice forward and also to develop my thoughts around treading lightly on the planet.

Fiona Doubleday

Slow stitching is an essential tool in my wellbeing box. It helps to centre and ground me. This project was a response to a forest fire on the island which destroyed a large part of land. I found that difficult to cope with so early work on this piece was challenging. But as I stitched from devastation on the left of the piece to a brighter hope on the right this journey spoke well to a sense of wellbeing at a time when we have all been so challenged.

Catriona Mason

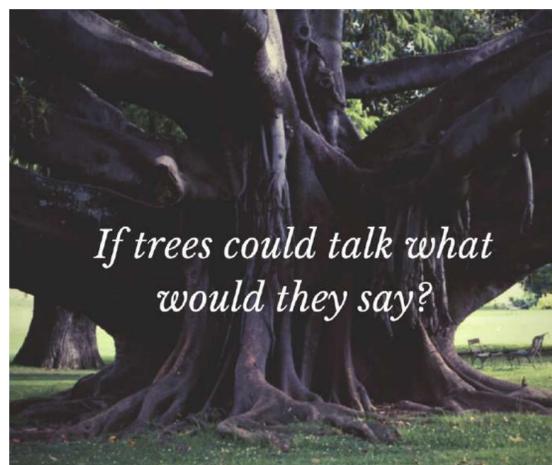
Stitching by hand is always soothing for me. I have bought no new clothes now for almost two years and have mended and repurposed where I can. I am doing my best to keep calm and help to conserve the world's dwindling resources.

Emma Siedle-Collins

Having an ongoing project that you can add to regularly without having to think in that moment - because you have already outlined a few steps in your sketchbook, gives you the freedom to just be in that moment which I find very therapeutic.

Carolyn Joan Ferris

I am not sure if the project spoke to my wellbeing, other than punctuating how interconnected we are with the natural world. I believe we cannot stay well unless we take better care of our environment.



Tell me about your experience of working creatively with this challenging narrative. Did it throw up any new questions about climate change and wider human damage to the planet? What do you hope your piece will communicate?

Catriona Mason

I hope that my piece will do three things. It will show how much pollution the making of fabrics and clothes does to the environment especially in countries where clean water is a scarce resource. It will also show that the vast majority of textile waste is in landfill. Grass and flowers may grow over the landfill site, but the waste is still underneath and not decomposed. The third part of the story shows that reducing production of textiles will help to clean up our environment.

Coral Smith

It was important for me to show how the small Scottish island where I live is being affected by climate change. The main road runs mostly around the outer edge of the island and is already being flooded at times, causing people to be cut off. Gales are far more frequent and stronger than in previous years causing damage, cancelled ferries, affecting people's lives. This is being replicated throughout the world, and low-lying island nations are being badly affected. We need to make changes now, before it's too late for millions of people, I hope that this shows in the piece I've created.

Elizabeth Carlsson

I hope that what is happening in the Arctic right now is not paralysing people. I hope my work touches them emotionally and becomes a starting point for even more work to prevent global warming.

Emma Siedle-Collins

Seeing the volume of plastic in our waters and the pollution in the air we breathe can be overwhelming. Addressing this in a small way by making a visual comment on the issues of what is and will hopefully be one day by using recycled fabrics and a meditative hand stitch can help us to process what is happening and make others aware.

Fiona Doubleday

This piece asked me so many questions. But the main residual question is 'Am I doing enough?' Once again it gave me the opportunity to examine my own creative practice and my wider life to see where I might make some changes to further reduce my carbon footprint. I hope the roots of the trees on my piece speak softly but with authority. If trees could speak what would they say? I firmly believe that trees use their roots as a form of communication not understood by humans. Without trees there would be no planet. If they could speak what would they tell the human race? It would be a sobering message I would think. Something to think about.

Sarah Blakeley

My piece is about coastal erosion which is a knock on effect from how human behaviour has effected the environment, how sea levels are rising and global warming is affecting the weather. Along the south coast of England we have a lot of cliff falls and over the years the structure of the coast line has changed dramatically. My piece shows the rock falls but it ends with a rock pool full of life, seaweeds, urchins, star fish and barnacles as well as rocks covered in lichen. My hope is that we can see that nature can find a way to live and heal again.

Charlotte Treglown

I chose to marry shocking statistics about the textile industry's impact on the earth's water resources with stitched pictures of watery places that are central to my physical and emotional well-being. This juxtaposition made me all the more grateful for the source of my drinking water (central panel) and the places where I walk. I hope my piece will communicate the importance of water as a precious resource, and perhaps encourage viewers to consider their own approach to buying new textiles. I'm based at the northern end of the Ribble Valley in Yorkshire.

Judy Payne

Being part of a group which shares an overall concern about our planet and our impact on it, hearing everyone's stories about their pieces and having an insight into their working processes has really raised my awareness on all of the issues we have addressed and I hope that, as a collective, our messages will be appreciated by a wider audience through the exhibition. I feel the experience has strengthened my resolve to ensure that I continue to tread lightly on the planet, to reuse, repurpose, recycle in my work. And I hope my piece can help communicate to others the threats we face if we do not work together to change our cumulative effect on our environment.

Carolyn Joan Ferris

I enjoyed doing a bit of research on coral reefs, I was really quite uninformed. I hope that people understand the threats of rising ocean temperatures, pollution and fishing, all of which damage and cause bleaching on coral reefs.

Ton Redvers

Creating this piece slowly gave me time to research and understand more about how quickly the earth is changing and the impact of climate change. It's made me think about 'stuff' and how much we really need to buy when we can mend and repurpose what we have. I hope my piece will communicate there can be positivity if we change now.

Ailish Scanlon

I'm hoping that my piece will encourage people to stop and think before buying unnecessary gifts and wrapping them in unnecessary paper, that we can appreciate the gifts of Mother Nature.



The Artists



Sarah Blakeley

I live on the south coast of England and I'm a full time mother to 2 children, before giving up work I used to work in a museum and art gallery. I have worked with textiles for over 30 years and dabbled in most techniques - felting, quilting, hand stitching and machine stitching. I don't have any formal art training and just like to experiment. I really like to reuse old clothes, I like the way the material can be faded and worn and has had a life before. My main way of working is to free motion machine stitch ripped pieces of fabric together, along with wool/silk fibres to create new textiles. I have recently started to hand stitch again and I'm getting interested into eco dying and printing.

[Designed by Mrs B Instagram](#)



Judy Payne

Hi I'm Judy. I'm a textile artist living in Cornwall with my husband where we have raised our family of four children. As they began leaving home for university and work I realised I needed a new direction so I enrolled on a textile course with our local adult education service. I have just recently completed level 3 Creative Craft - Textiles and am now establishing my own textile practice. I am inspired by nature and the sea in the Cornish landscape around me and I work with vintage and reclaimed/repurposed fabrics and notions to create unique textile pieces using both hand-stitching and free motion embroidery.

[Henrietta's Stitchery Facebook](#)



Tonia Redvers

My name is Tonia and I live on the south coast of England, work full time and love creating. I have 4 children which took up a lot of time, but as they grew and life became less busy, I found a little time to explore creating with watercolours, acrylics, fibres and textiles. Over the last 7 years that has grown and my main passion is definitely felting pictures, lampshades and forest animals, with lots of lovely stitching and this remains the core of what I do at Redvers Creative. Recently though I have spent many wonderful hours hand-stitching and working quietly and mindfully and playing again just for the fun of it.

[Redvers Creative website](#)



Fiona Doubleday

Founder of Stitched Stories & Wellbeing. I live on the Isle of Arran, off the west coast of Scotland. I work sustainably in my practice and I am inspired by the island I call home. I am also a mother of four children and I am constantly aware of my personal legacy and what I am passing onto my children.

[Fiona Doubleday Artist Etsy Store](#)



Coral Smith

I'm an artist working in many different mediums, who lives and works on the Isle of Arran off the west coast of Scotland. Although I now work with many different materials, fabric and hand stitching was where I began this journey long ago as a small child. Whilst I've moved into many other areas, stitching will always be part of what I do, and recycling, reusing and repurposing are very important to me in my work.

[Seaspray Designs, Arran Etsy.](#)



Carolyn Joan-Ferris

I am a senior citizen living in Huntsville, Ontario, Canada. My working life was spent raising three sons, running a used bookstore, and teaching piano lessons. Now that I am retired, I have time to pursue hobbies...I would say I am a generalist...puddling away with lots of different projects. This one on coral reefs has been enjoyable and a great covid activity.



Charlotte Treglown

Most of my work is based around botanical printing, and natural dyeing, using colours from plant material, and stitch. As a matter of principle I use no new materials in my textile work, choosing instead to recycle and repurpose old fabrics and threads.

[Ribble Recycled Facebook](#)



Catriona Mason

I'm Catriona and I have been retired now for 14 years. My gran taught me to knit and sew when I was four years old and I try to do some craft work every day. I'm passionate about saving textiles from landfill and love repurposing unwanted fabric and haberdashery. Hand stitching is my favourite way to relax.



Phillippa Ward

My name is Pip Ward. I live in beautiful Herefordshire. I am never without something crafty within my hands. I enjoy spinning, weaving, crochet, loom knitting, knitting, along with other crafts thrown in the mix as and when life needs a little spice. Spinning and free weaving/Saori are my preferred crafts.



Elizabeth Carlsson

My name is Elizabeth Carlsson and I live in Sweden. I have a little hut on my allotment and this is my summer studio. For six months a year I live there, do a lot of gardening, dyeing, making paper, sketching and almost every day I write Haiku. In my winter studio - a big kitchen in my apartment- I paint with watercolours and inks, do free embroidery, calligraphy and collage. My artwork is always based on current environmental issues, such as global climate change, ecological gardening, threatened biodiversity, seed war and more. I love working in collaboration with other artists. I have a background in music, dance, literature and drama and I strive to combine these forms of art as often as possible.



Emma Siedle-Collins

I use printmaking and collage with machine stitched recycled and dyed fabrics to make small works inspired by colour and form in the landscape and my garden. My work also incorporates the patterns and marks in both nature and the manmade environment and inspiration from the weathered and discarded. I find such joy in mixing these different media, finishing with meditative hand stitch to bring it all together into one cohesive whole.

[Emma Siedle-Collins mixed media & textiles Facebook](#)



Ailish Scanlon

My name is Ailish Scanlon. I live in Dublin but am from the beautiful county Donegal in the northwest of Ireland. I spend as much time as possible there. The very strict lockdown we had in Dublin was tough for me as I like to travel and go out a lot. Zoom became my means of travel and I learned dances and recipes from all over the world making lots of new friends. I've always been a knitter. Recently I got a gift of a sewing machine and rescued 2 x 300m of cotton from a skip so I've been doing simple sewing projects.



Claire Phillips

My studio Hope Jacare Designs in West Kilbride is my happy place. I hand dye fibres and fabrics that allow me to further explore ideas I have for textile and mixed media pieces. I simply love what I do and an important element of that is hand stitching.

[Hope Jacare Designs website](#)

The Future

Using stitch as a language to communicate something as important as the damage humanity has done to the planet has been empowering for all involved. We now take a small step back and allow others to read our messages. On the 31st October we will take a strong step forward to hear what the conference members discuss and evaluate the resolutions they make. The entire world will be watching and the time is, very much, now. As a group we will be meeting again post conference to discuss the outcomes from the conference. After which, we will make a statement ourselves.



As a group I am sure we will meet again and work together on future projects using stitch as a powerful language in an increasingly complex world. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every member of the #slowsummerstitch project. Your dedication and commitment has been remarkable in a time when our lives are so unsettled. It has been a complete honour to spend the summer of 2021 with you.

Fiona Doubleday
Founder, Stitched Stories & Wellbeing
October 2021

