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Here and there, now

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Here and there, now

Sandra Heffernan

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A textile installation shaped by traditional embroidery, geographical differences, technology and novel natural dye is the focus of this paper. 'Through the globe' [*Através do globo*] is the result of a six week artist in residency at Contextile 2016 in Guimarães, Portugal.¹ It builds upon environmental pest invasive weed dye research, interprets 'traditional' embroidery illustrating the poetics of place.² The essence of Guimarães embroidery provides the narrative along the fourteen metre length and is the physical embodiment of the antipodal link between and Wellington, New Zealand. The challenge offered by Contextile 2016 was to collaborate with Oficina embroiderers to learn, then use traditional Guimarães embroidery, and, then exhibit the work at *Residências Artísticas* at *Casa da Memória* [House of Memory] in the Contextile 2016 triennial.³

During a period in the late nineteenth century a desire for the creation of national identity existed and the documentation of Guimarães embroidery began to ensure it gained visibility.⁴ The embroidery arose from a range of other factors including human will, sensibility, and dexterity to create a united unique style. Traditionally, rural women's waistcoats were richly embroidered, such as one included in the University of Aberdeen Needlework Development Scheme collection.⁵ Now, Guimarães embroidery is mostly used to adorn home ware products for the tourist market.

In the 'Through the Globe' concept I imagined travelling in the Earth's strange ferrous dark interior from the ancient civilisation of Guimarães 41.44253 North, to emerge in an inky sea, beneath the starry skies at an antipodal point near Wellington 41.3366566 South. Here the very uneven Earth's brim is dotted with mountainous peaks and the Pacific Ocean's tumultuous rising seas thunder into the coastline. I wondered if gravity would organise embroidery in a traditional way or create new synergies from the different territories.

Representing the motion of fluid in the outer Earth's core is a flow of indigo, walnut, and invasive weed dye tincture. It melds with a ferrous base signifying the Earth's inner metallic core. An interplay with traditional Guimarães embroidery and the antipodal concept presents some distorted motifs as though squeezed through the Earth's core to lie amongst the imaginary shadows and protrusions of the landmasses. The tactile experience conspired to bring out the antipodal 'aesthetic moment' in traditional Guimarães embroidery.

¹ Artist residencies. <http://contextile.pt/2016/en/portfolio/residencias-artisticas-open-call-2/>

² An invasive weed, *clematis vitalba*, a forest destroying invasive pest in New Zealand provides a golden hue dye extract. Originally released as an ornamental garden plant, *clematis vitalba* escaped into the sub-alpine environment, preventing forest regeneration. It can cause significant damage in native forests by smothering large areas of trees. Commonly called Old man's beard, the peculiar greyish-yellow-tinged, hairy moss, clings to trees and old wood, but it contains anti fungal and anti-biotic properties and produces interesting color. The initial challenge was to establish the most effective means of extracting colorant. Dyeing using *clematis vitalba* is novel, recognising responsibility to environmental concerns and helps to make a textile product more "green" and sustainable. The dye process did not use any salt or toxic chemicals and used a minimal amount of water.

³ Contextile 2016 Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/contextile/photos/pcb.904010243038448/904007279705411/?type=3&theater>

⁴ Isabel Fernandes. *Bordado de Guimarães Renovar a Tradição*. [Guimarães Embroidery renewing a Tradition], Santa Maria de Feira: Rainho & Neves, 2012.

⁵ Sandra Heffernan. Design from "Artefacts: Issues in Aesthetics, Collecting, Education, making and Marketing in J & P Coats' Needlework Development Scheme: 1934-1962." PhD diss. Glasgow School of Art, 2004.

Here to there, now



Figure 1: *Through the Globe [Através do globo]* view from Guimarães. in *Residências Artísticas* at Casa da Memória [House of Memory], Linen, silk, leather dye, embroidery. 14m x 0.58cms x 0.25 cms. Photo: Sandra Heffernan

An antipodal journey begins, Wellington 41.3366566 South
Divergent in Guimarães 41.44253 North
Guimarães, ancient, medieval, times past the tannery as economic hub
Wellington, young, Pacific



Figure 2: *Through the Globe*, from the south. Photo: Sandra Heffernan

A concept of travelling through the Earth's strange ferrous dark interior
From the ancient civilisation of Guimarães
And maybe the antipodal coordinates are fixed near Westport, but
Because Farewell Spit is physically interesting
With convoluted coastline and sandy protuberances
The inky sea, beneath the starry skies
At an antipodal point near Wellington is the emergence point.

Then to dye, underpinned with historical lichen research
And natural indigo, walnut interrupted by the invasive weed

Clematis vitalba, Old Man's Beard, golden hues from Hokianga
Migrates along the fibre
A pest that loves to smother indigenous trees
And now fluidity, to blend or contrast with other colour
Left turns, right turns, no exits and pathways forward.



Figure 3: Embroidery on dyed linen detail. Photo: Sandra Heffernan.

And the essence of 'traditional' embroidery
And to Oficina to translate
And what matters, technical virtuosity
Canutilhos, nozinhos, atrás, pé-de-flor, cadeia traditional red or Guimarães grey.



Figure 4: Traditional early twentieth century waistcoat in University of Aberdeen Needlework Development Scheme collection.⁶ Photo: Sandra Heffernan.

And technology and surplus material
Leather, convoluted curves from traditional design
Die cut, CNC die cut
And with new fast attachments
A blended relationship between physical and digital worlds.

⁶ Heffernan, "Design from Artefacts," 75.



Figure 5: Die cut leather embroidered onto dyed linen. Photo: Sandra Heffernan.

Laser cut silk flower motifs evoke Farewell Spit
Squeezed through the Earth's core
To lie amongst the imaginary shadows and protrusions of the landmasses
An interplay with the translation of traditional Guimarães embroidery.



Figure 6: Laser cut silk flowers embroidered onto linen. Photo: Sandra Heffernan.

Two places merged in one blue sea
And I, travelled it with *muka* and *atrás*, emotion
Because it is an unhappy earth, storms, heat, fires
And 365 rumbling earthquakes
And oh, to exhibit in a convoluted line!



Figure 7: Muka embroidered in atrás stitch on dyed linen. Photo: Sandra Heffernan.

Two places merged in one blue sea, And I
Took the place less travelled
Through the Globe [*Através do globo*]
And, stitch, dye, and technology interrupted tradition to make the difference.