

Anna Ray

Artist Statement

Through making by hand, I explore the visual and emotive potential of materials. I enjoy experimenting with different media, predominantly fibre based: silk, cotton, velvet, wool and paper. Each has the potential to be transformed using domestic equipment and tools: a sewing machine, scissors, pliers, a needle. My work often blurs the boundaries between two and three-dimensional forms of art; some pieces are painted or stained, like canvases in relief. My life and personal experiences influence my practice; emotions and memories creep in. I feed my active imagination with research, drawing on nature, ancient and historical art, design and craft. My desire is to create work that is sensually rich and captivating.

Biography

Anna Ray studied BA (Hons) and MFA Tapestry at Edinburgh College of Art between 1994 and 1999. She became a Lecturer in the department soon after graduation and taught for six years before relocating to London in 2006. Ray was artist in residence at Winterbourne Botanic Garden, University of Birmingham in 2004. In 2015-2016 she was artist in residence for The RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Ray has been granted major awards for her work and has exhibited nationally and internationally over the last twenty-five years in both applied art and fine art contexts. Ray has been commissioned to make work for public collections: Paintings in Hospitals and Marie Curie Cancer Care. In 2014 the law firm Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co acquired and commissioned a series of major works for their new premises in Birmingham.

She exhibited in the high profile exhibition 'Entangled: Threads & Making' curated by Karen Wright at Turner Contemporary in Margate in 2017. In 2018, Ray's work 'Madame Bovary' was chosen for the 6th Riga International Textile and Fibre Art Triennial in Latvia. In the same year Ray was selected for the 'Home' project by People United, The Diocese of Canterbury and Ashford Borough Council. This unique commission involved recently-arrived Syrian mothers and local mothers who live in Ashford, Kent.

In 2018 Ray was awarded an a-n Artists Bursary for the R&D project 'Pointillist' which looks at the genesis, history, and technology behind the pixelated image - the Jacquard Loom mechanism that inspired modern computing. Ray's grandfather operated one of the early computers at Walthamstow Town Hall for the company International Computers Limited, and her French Huguenot ancestors were silk weavers in Spitalfields, London in the 18th Century. Ray spent a period of time studying the working hand looms of the commercial weavers Dash + Miller and The Bristol Weaving Mill. As a result of this research she is now collaborating with the School of Design at the University of Leeds in the 3D Weaving Innovation Centre.

Ray was commissioned to make new work for Art in Manufacturing Season 3 at the National Festival of Making in Blackburn in 2019, following a residency at Forbo Flooring. Her 'Offcut' series was then reinstalled for The British Textile Biennial. This time the work was seen in a heritage setting, at Queen

Street Mill Textile Museum in Bamber Bridge - the only working steam mill in the world. In spring 2020, Ray completed 'Loom', a large-scale commission for Facebook London Offices, part of the FB AIR Program.

Following her participation in Collect 2021 with House on Mars Gallery Ray was awarded the prestigious Brookfield Properties Crafts Council Collection Award. Two works created during lockdown 'Capture' and 'Weave' were acquired by Brookfield Properties as a gift for the Crafts Council Primary Collection. As part of the award Ray exhibited her work in a solo exhibition with Brookfield Properties during the summer of 2021. On Tenterhooks showcased major works and films across two London venues - 99 Bishopsgate and Aldgate Tower.

In November 2021 'Fibre and Form' a major solo show of sculptural textile work opened at St Albans Museum + Gallery including two stunning new commissions (pictured), with funding from a National Lottery Project Grant Award through ACE. Ann Coxon, Curator of International Art, Tate Modern, wrote text to accompany the exhibition. The show was visited by twenty-two thousand people over a five month period.

The curator and journalist Corinne Julius selected Ray's work for her influential Future Heritage showcase at DECOREX 2021 at Olympia London, and then again in 2022 at the Design Centre London. Ray is a visiting lecturer at schools, alternative provision services, colleges and universities. She is a fine artist with a deep interest in working with fibre and textiles, and so her work has a unique appeal for audiences.

