



New Horizons was formed in 1993 by a group of stitchers who had recently finished City and Guilds Patchwork and Quilting, encouraged and supported for many years by tutor Barbara Weeks.

New members join the group by invitation, and inevitably over the years, members have come and gone, though two of the original group still attend – Cheryl Jackson, and Pauline Adams. Always based in the Hertfordshire area, the group meets twice a month to plan and share ideas – and of course, to sew!

From its formation, the aim was to extend skills with regular workshops, but significantly also to be an exhibiting group. Group quilts have been exhibited at Houston when one member, Janice Gunner, won the Jewel Pearce Patterson scholarship. Group quilts have also won awards – “The View from Here” (1999), based on the view from the hall in which the group meet, and “Daphne” (2005) - the latter now held in the collection of the Quilters Guild of the British Isles. Individual winners have included Janice Gunner, Cherry Vernon-Harcourt (past member) and Stephanie Pettengall. At time of writing, the date of the next exhibition is being planned with a number of avenues being explored, including a possible international exhibition.

The group’s skills are broad with many individual styles. Many members over the years have been or are teachers, and the aim for sharing learning has been key, both within and external to the group. Wide ranging styles currently include dyeing, painting and printing fabrics - both new and old; precise piecing and applique, free machine quilting and Shibori. Design has always been a strength, including again a range of styles – from free and abstract, to precise geometric and including images and text and texture.

With such a range of styles and skills, any theme for an exhibition will produce hugely varied work. Inspiration initially comes often from brainstorming ideas within the group and a desire to develop particular skills, or may come from external influences such as when



“The View from Here” 1999



“Now we are 20” deckchairs on display



“Daphnes Show & Tell” 2005



“Poppies” 2014 Pauline Adams

designing based on a museum piece as in “Logs to Lace” in 2012. Restrictions as to size, format or potentially style are often self-imposed to encourage the need to think broadly about an idea and may also reflect the space in which the exhibition is to take place. The “Inside out” exhibition at Stockwood Discovery centre, Bedfordshire, in 2010, showed a range of 3D pieces that were exhibited outside – in all weathers! Other 3D pieces included 3D cubes in 2013, and a more standard format was used in the exhibition “Now we are Twenty,” celebrating the groups 20th anniversary. It is these restrictions that can often produce the best work and a commonality will become apparent as the date approaches.

To quote one longstanding member; “We aim for something different each and every time we exhibit to fascinate the viewer and give them a new look on the production of our textile art, this may be in size – long and skinny – A4 poppies – 3D cubes or a wall hanging in strips. In this way we have successfully passed on ideas to other textile artists and groups of all experiences. Visitors to our exhibitions in the past have taken away our ideas and formats and used them in their work or their group work. We enjoy seeing their interpretation of our methods of working and therefore we feel we are a successful group in inspiring other stitchers.”

It is the ability to review, reflect, evolve and take (supportive) feedback from each other that is key. All members want to develop and so listen to the views of others on their work – but equally all get on well together and are not internally competitive. All are unanimous that it is the companionship of like-minded friends with a common interest that is the vital bond and the longevity of the group reflects this. Likewise, a key element is an emphasis on personal development – something aided by the varied skills and interests of the group, learning from each other and each other’s work whilst recognising the struggle it can be to get there!

What can other groups learn from New Horizons? Perhaps most importantly, don’t be afraid to step back, reflect and grow and perhaps surprise yourself. But remember to have fun and support each other – be prepared to critique work but in a constructive way, and equally be open to take comments from others. Aim to enjoy your textiles and have some fun!

New Horizons currently has some capacity for new members so if you think you might be interested please get in touch. jackie.ketley@virgin.net

www.newhorizonstextilegroup.com

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UNPICKED - THE NEW HORIZONS TEXTILE GROUP

Step back, reflect and grow is the motto of the New Horizons stitchers, who share their styles and skills to create exciting collaborative exhibitions

Now we are 20 Betty Ball 3D cube