

Kelly Thompson - Artist statement 2010

The practice and language of textiles as an expanded field within art interests me, as does the particularity of the communication that fibres media provide, whether through surface, structure, digital screen or moving image. Textile practices are a state of mind, a sensibility that moves across virtual, physical, electronic, social, cultural and conceptual realms of artistic activity.

Contemporary textiles or fibres practices along with the material objects of other times and places, can be read in many ways; as texts of time and geography, family and society, art, culture, politics and economics. Increasingly textile terminology and their metaphors are adopted by and embedded in other disciplines, while fibres related expressions incorporate and lend fresh perspectives to other practices.

My recent practice-based research utilizes computer-assisted hand Jacquard weave technologies to produce cloth embedded with narrative content, which are exhibited in contemporary art contexts. Earlier work engaged with dyeing and painted threads and manipulating these during weaving to construct multilayered imagery, using drawing and mapping as references. This work has been exhibited in and collected by major public galleries in Australia and New Zealand.

A nomadic life has informed my artwork with extended periods living in California, New Zealand, Australia, and the UK, with regular travel to South East Asia, the Pacific, India and Europe. These experiences have intrinsically shaped my research interests: recurring themes include notions of location and identity; souvenirs, travel and material culture read through Postcolonial theory; textiles as signifier and representation; environmental issues and questions of genetic manipulation as another site for corporate colonialist expansion, political interventionism and ways in which language is hijacked for dubious goals; the signs and traces of order and layered chaos of street life and politics.

Teaching statement

For 20 some years, in parallel to my art activities, I have been a lecturer in textile and arts education at degree and postgraduate levels. The experiential learning that informs practice is relevant in my approach to working with students for whom the sense of touch and exploration through process and material engagement is important. The cultural, conceptual and technical contexts for contemporary textiles have also greatly expanded over this time, continuing to provide a rich and exciting international community to be a part of.