

Marking Time

Date: 27th November to 1st December 2023

Venue: InStitches Textile Studio, Eversley

Experience level; suitable for any level

A key element of Claire's practice is that of slow, quiet, contemplative work and a love of old cloth.

The appeal of hand work is the slowness, quietness and the rhythm and peace to be found in repetition. The appeal of old cloth lies in its (usually) humble roots, be that a bed sheet, tea towel, napkin, handkerchief, quilt, pillow slip or shirt. Old cloth is already marked by the passage of time and seems to have a resonance, it speaks to us. Colours may be faded by weather or laundering or there may be areas of wear and tear. These are things that offer a particular tactile experience, which can be respected and offer inspiration.

Many of us also respond to what can be found in the landscape (rural and urban) and as with old cloth, it's often the decayed and time-battered items that seem to appeal the most; smooth pebbles, bent sticks and twigs, desiccated leaves, rusted, holed, bent and worn objects, weathered tiles, timber, brick and stone. All have been marked by time and often have qualities of purity, restraint, simplicity and humility. Time is also a crucial element for 'active' looking, the kind of looking that enables us to notice the small details and establish a sense of place and a feel for things.

This workshop is designed to enable students to:

- take the time to actively look, notice, observe, contemplate and extract what personally matters.
- engage and respond through the processes of collecting, hand stitching, mark-making, over-painting, writing, drawing, assembling, wrapping, binding, painting eroding and distressing.
- discuss (one-to-one and as a group).
- hold and experience silence and stillness.

A finished piece may or may not be the end result. Each student will 'mark' their time in their own individual way and the tangible results may only be revealed in the fullness of time.

ON-SITE SUPPLIES & SUPPLIES FEE

A selection of media and tools will be supplied appropriate to the workshop, including:

- A wide selection of thread
- India/China ink: for use on paper and cloth
- Acrylic mediums and a limited palette of acrylic paint
- A selection of earth pigments
- Coloured acrylic inks
- Chunky charcoal and graphite
- Water-soluble coloured pencils
- Candles/tea-lights
- Paper
- Awns and screw-punches
- A good selection of mark-making tools
- Cotton scrim/butter muslin and/or cotton plasterer's scrim
- Fusible web
- Antique French hemp (a small piece per student)

STUDENT REQUIREMENTS - WHAT TO BRING

A key requirement for each student is to 'travel light'. For this to happen, each student **MUST** be selective in choosing only items they truly respond to and truly believe they'll use. Key things to bring include:

CLOTH

Please make sure the cloth you bring is scoured/well-washed.

- Old cloth in natural cellulose fibres in whatever form or weight that may take. This might include old shirts, tea towels, napkins, handkerchiefs, jeans, aprons or plain cloth. **No more than the equivalent of a half metre (and a couple of small pieces is fine) and make sure the weave isn't too tight for hand stitch!**
- A half-yard of silk organza.
- **No more** than 2 metres of medium-weight white or unbleached linen (please scour the linen before coming). Sources include Ikea and:
 - www.dalstonmillsfabrics.co.uk – the Milltown Irish linen in ivory is a good weight.
 - www.linenme.com - the natural linen 'Provence' is nice

THREAD & SEWING SUPPLIES (CB will also bring a wide selection)

- Hand-stitching thread; of a fine to medium weight, nothing thick or 'chunky' please. Choose colours carefully by thinking about the old cloth or weathered items you'll be using it on. Please ensure you have some white, black, grey and some neutrals.
- Machine-weight thread that would work with the hand-stitch thread (you might need to couch!).
- A good variety of needles; again, think of the hand stitch thread you've chosen and select needles accordingly.
- A general sewing kit; including a thimble if you like to use one, small, sharp scissors and a stitch ripper.
- Pins; pins for pinning up ideas and pins suitable for pinning threads or similar on to cloth. As pins are small, lightweight items, you may wish to get creative and consider entomology or lace-makers pins. You might stitch them down as marks on your old cloth.

GENERAL SUPPLIES

- No more than three small, old, weathered objects/items of choice. This might include weathered plastic, an old rusted can, nails, hooks, small bones or weathered sticks, a piece of metal 'junk', pebbles etc. Go looking and scavenge.
- A piece of thick-ish plastic about 2m x 1.25m – you can source this at InStitches.
- Favourite mark-making tools. Within this, consider at most:
 - ⇒ 2 'off-the-shelf' pens (permanent black ink only please)
 - ⇒ 2 calligraphy-type pens (purchased or home-made).
 - ⇒ 2 pencils of different hardness/softness
 - ⇒ 3 brushes, perhaps fine, medium and large.
 - ⇒ 1 empty and washed soft drink/beer can for making a cola pen or bring a cola pen if you have one.
- A small cutting mat or similar that you don't mind getting paint or glue on.
- An Extacto-type craft knife with a nice, sharp pointy blade.
- A sketchbook or notebook (if bound, be willing to tear out the pages)
- Cloth apron and comfy shoes.
- A camera, or use a phone (which will be on 'silent') or an ipad.
- Journaling, notes, references; key written work or references that may be important for your marking of time.
- Headphones if you like to work to music.

Please contact Claire at cb@clairebenn.com if you have any queries about the class content or supplies.