

During the pandemic, 2020-2022, older people in Derbyshire joined together to make A Necklace of Stars. Here, embroideries, poems and songs reach up to the night sky. Some celebrate the quiet comfort of a snooze, others explore myriad webs of dreams, fears and wishes...

An embroidered quilt is the guiding star for this project, evoking childhood bedtime stories; safety, comfort, protection: a door into dreaming, a way to escape lockdown and step into the big universe.

OPPOSITE:

JEAN WELLS, Embroidery

Lead Artist: [Lois Blackburn](#)

Lead Writer: [Philip Davenport](#)

Songwriter: [Matt Hill](#)

Project Coordinator: Nicky Bellenger, on behalf of [Arts Derbyshire](#)

Photography and Book Design: [Lois Blackburn](#)

A Necklace of Stars Project

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A Necklace of Stars CATALOGUE

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“How many of us
Have stood alone
With our thoughts and feelings
And gazed into this vast expanse
We call the universe?”

Neil Sessions

Introduction

Connection in a time of social fragmentation

It started with Arts Derbyshire's desire to meet the needs of those whose needs are often forgotten; to use creativity to fight the loneliness experienced by so many of our population; to go deeper in engagement than we had previously been able to do. And so A Necklace of Stars was conceived – we partnered with skilled artists Lois Blackburn, Phil Davenport and Matt Hill to work with housebound older people one to one in their own homes, funded by Arts Council England and Derbyshire County Council Public Health, and working alongside the Derbyshire Home Library Service. We would create a physical 'necklace of stars' – an embroidered quilt with a poem and song soundtrack, inspired by lullabies: exploring calm and comfort, building confidence and wellbeing, reducing loneliness and forging connections, reigniting creativity.

A Necklace of Stars was born in a different, pre-pandemic world, and yet was perfectly shaped to adapt to this new reality. COVID-19 reached our shores just as we were about to set sail on this new adventure. Loneliness and isolation was now a pandemic within the pandemic; and we had the tools to address this in some small way. We expanded the definition of 'housebound' to include older people at risk of loneliness or isolation through the pandemic, some of whom were shielding. Instead of travelling to people's homes we used the telephone and postal services to connect with people who often didn't have the technology to do video chat. Participants chatted, stitched, wrote poetry or prose, shared time and energy, wrote songs, felted, found freedom in old ways of connecting, told stories, and made music. A Necklace of Stars brought calm in a storm, connection in a time of social fragmentation, and inspired creativity in crisis.

A Necklace of Stars has been hugely challenging but also a unique and poignant moment in time. I am extremely grateful to and proud of all who have worked on the project - staff, artists and participants - who have made it so much more than we could have imagined; and I am thrilled that we can now share this beautiful work with others through the exhibition. I hope that it will bring comfort and calm, and inspire creativity.

Helena Reynolds Arts and Health Coordinator, Arts Derbyshire www.artsderbyshire.org.uk

“One to one telephone conversations with an artist, discussing the skill and creativity you use to bring a piece of embroidery into the world: I can well imagine the joy and comfort this project brought to people living housebound and alone.”

Samuel West: actor, director

Chair of the [National Campaign for the Arts](#)

“The recognition that many people cannot access online services is an important one, and one which is often overlooked by many. **I love the way the project offers both human connection and a creative outlet** – as I believe both are basic human needs.”

[Francesca Martinez](#): comedian, writer, actress

“A wonderfully creative and accessible project that provided increased wellbeing and reduced isolation for home-bound older adults. It is great to see how this project quickly adapted from face-to-face to a Covid-safe way of reaching out to a vulnerable group of people during lockdown.”

Petra Roberts: Cultural Development Manager, Hackney Council



“I am alive at last. Instead of autopilot, someone’s flipped the switch. And it started with looking at the stars.”

A NECKLACE OF STARS

Embroidered quilt

“A friend of 40 years died yesterday.

When I was stitching today I thought that star is going to be you.”



A NECKLACE OF STARS (CROSS SECTION)

Embroidered quilt, re-used dyed fabric, applied fabrics, threads, buttons, sequins

A Necklace of Stars

A necklace of stars sparkles,
Gracefully around the neck
Of this cosmological goddess

In the firmament; she reigns
Over her subjects
As they move, almost indiscernibly

Oh! How I love the night sky...
Softly, it holds me
Its cloak of darkest velvet from on high

Wraps me
Soothingly, quietly
Whispers, that darkness is nigh...

A necklace of stars,
Interspersed with dreams.

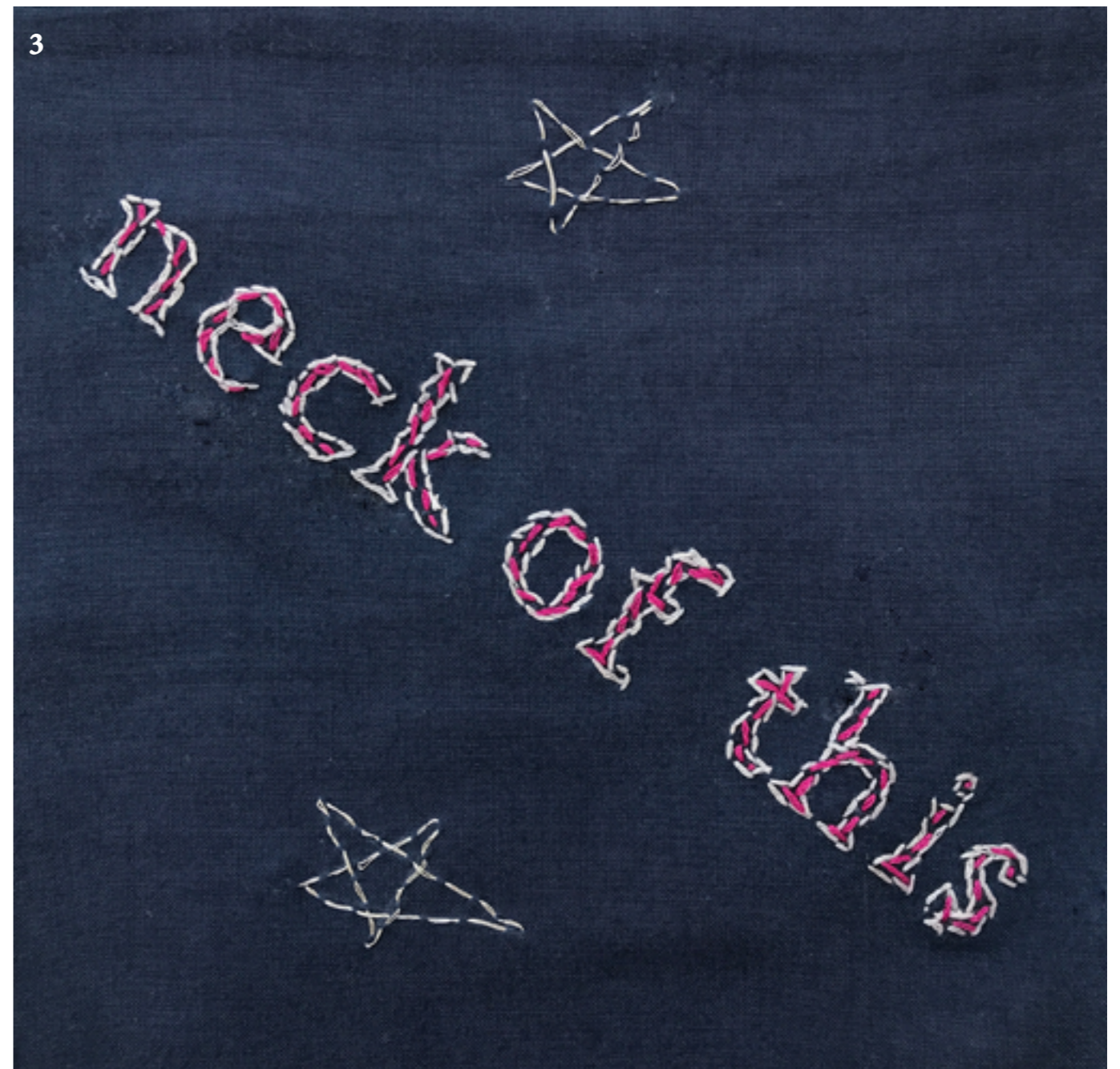
Anne, Anne Saunders. and T.S.
(embroidered poem)



A POEM
wraps the quilt

JOAN WILMOT

(embroidery detail)



1

JOAN BEADSMOORE

Hand stitched, cotton threads, beading

2

BEV

Hand stitched, silver threads, sequins

3

SHEILA BOOTH

Hand stitched, cotton threads



4

MARYLYN MACLENNAN

Hand stitched, cotton and metallic threads, sequins

5

JOAN WILMOT

Hand stitched, applique cotton threads, beading



6

MARGARET GOSLEY

Hand stitched, cotton threads

8

ANONYMOUS

Hand stitched, cotton threads



7

JEAN WELLS

Hand stitched, cotton threads

9

ELIZABETH PICKIN

Hand stitched, cotton and metallic threads



10

10

MARGARET GILLER

Hand stitched, cotton threads, beads, button

11

LOIS BLACKBURN

Hand stitched, applique, sequins

18



11

13



12

12

PAT GYONGYOSI

Hand stitched, cotton threads

13

DOREEN ANDREWS

Hand stitched, cotton & metallic threads





14

SHEILA MOLYNEUX

Hand & machine stitched, applique, sequins

16

ANONYMOUS

Hand stitched, cotton threads

15

PATRICIA HARDING

Hand stitched, cotton threads, beading

17

FRAN COHEN

Hand stitched, cotton threads, buttons

18

LOIS BLACKBURN

Hand stitched, cotton threads

20

SOPHIE GUEST

Hand stitched, cotton threads

19

ANONYMOUS

Hand stitched, applique, sequins

21



21

JOAN WILMOT

Hand stitched, applique, cotton threads, beading

22



23



22

GILL ORMOND

Hand stitched, cotton threads, beading

23

ANDREA LEWIS

Hand stitched, cotton threads, buttons

Jean Miller

Close your tender eyes

I was a child during a war
Bomb shelters and sirens
Go to bed ready dressed
And mum took me to the Anderson shelter
Go to sleep my baby
Close your tender eyes
Lullaby-singing.

Born 1934

I was five when it started
Wasn't time for laughing
Dad worked in the steel
Mum in munitions
Wasn't much time for
Stories and sitting on laps.
Jesus friend of little children
Dear friend to me.

Wondering after the next bomb
— Sirens' call gives you a funny feel —
Is your house still standing
Or not? Underground
Someone played the accordion:
Baby, how I wish I was
Up above the bright blue sky.

Jean Miller

May 1934 - November 2020

24



24

JEAN MILLER

Hand stitched, cotton thread

Lex Allison

Christmas Round Robin

“Our first full year here, full of learning, hard work and beauty. At midnight in January I rounded the track to the house to see a great pulsing light in the sky to the North. My heart stopped, fearing the worst, before I realised it was Aurora Borealis, The Northern Lights. Then Mary and I stood in the frost for ages just watching in wonder...”

(Extract from Lex’s autobiography)

Maxine Broadbent

The Sun

In the morning the sun rose in the East and lay
Pale and delicately formed, tentatively
Regarding the tasks for the day.
Wakening, warming gently, watching attentively.

Then, growing in strength and sullenness
Swelling, reddening and ageing,
Began to dry, to burn and scorch;
Settling finally in a deep burst of anger in the West.

Pam Butler

Montaigne, opened at random,
or 24 hours in Lockdown

We must cling tooth and claw to the...
pleasures of this life...
it is up to us to live.

Michel de Montaigne 1533-92

I have disappeared from the world and may never return;
or, is it will never return?
My will is smudged like dirt along the window frames,
scattered and obscure in the dust along the skirting board,

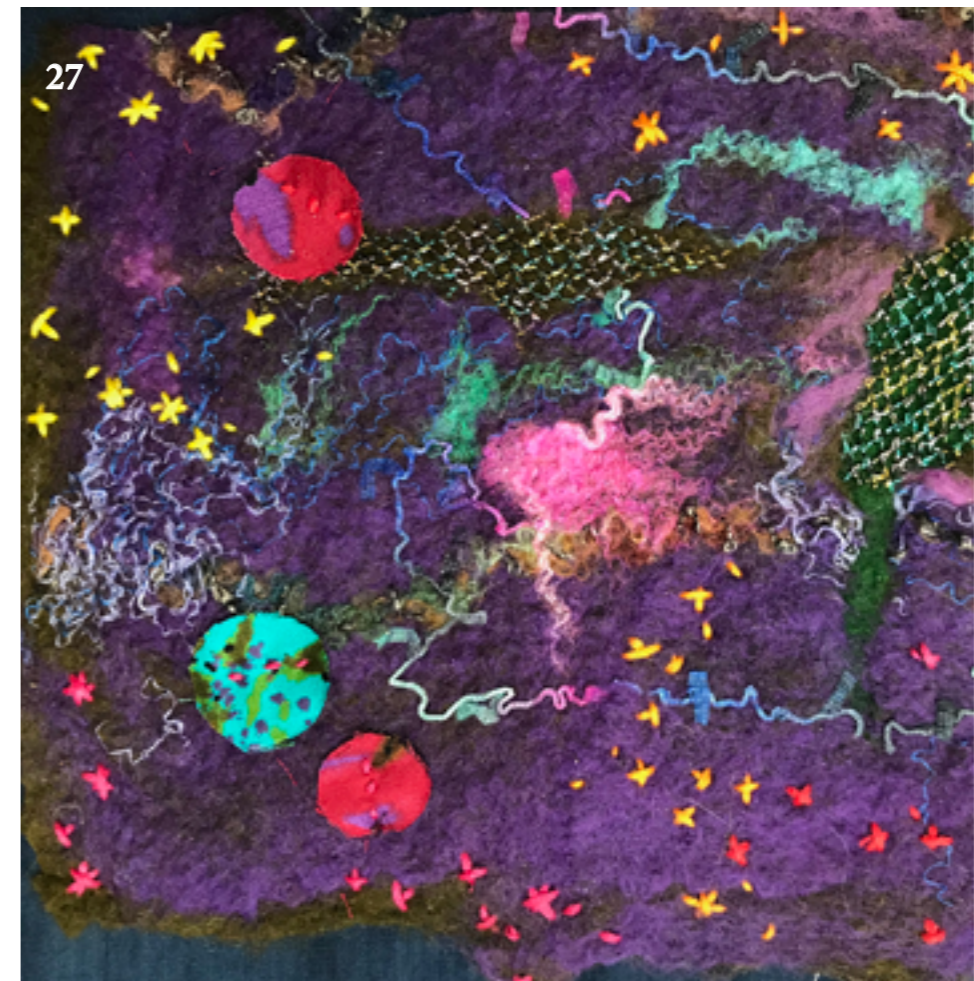
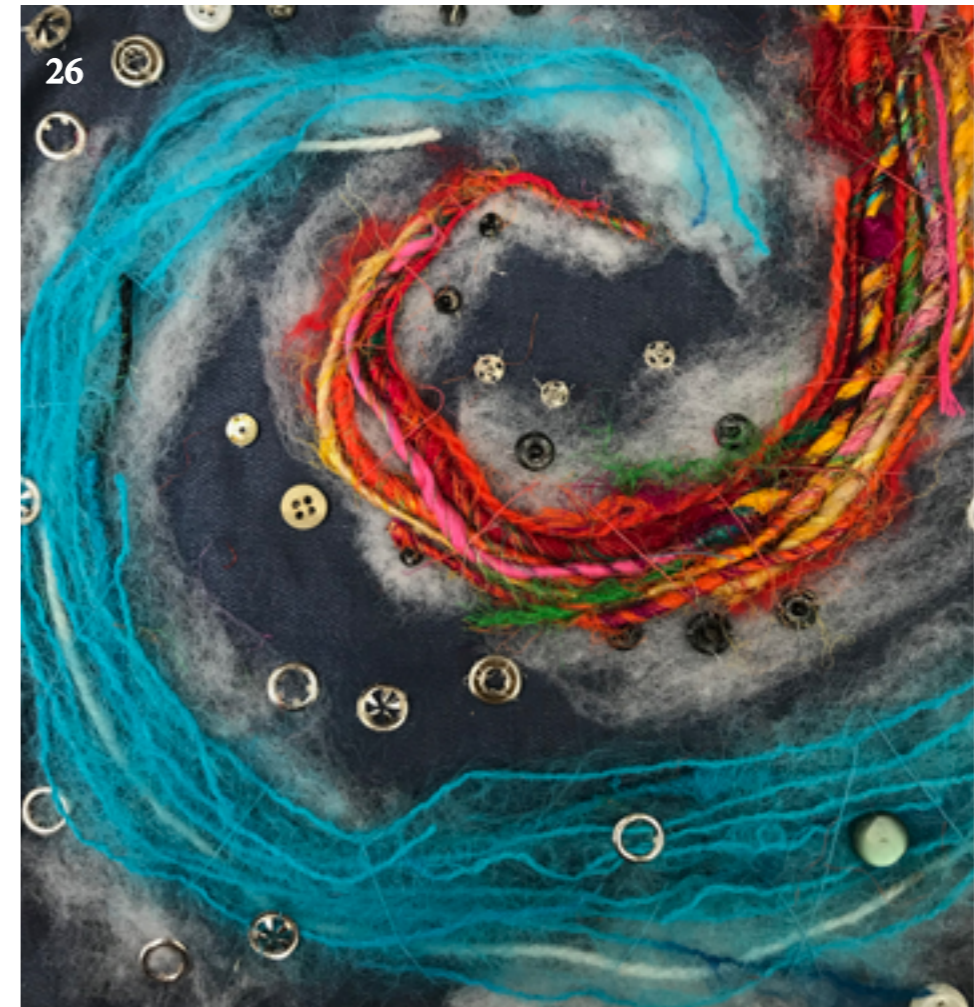
everything is slowed down and nothing happens.
The queue long outside the chemist,
desultory conversation in a biting wind.
Smell of diesel pungent and strange as a lorry revs at the crossing.

My attention wanders in a Zoom meeting.
It's nice to see friendly faces.
Your bookshelves, dining rooms, bedsteads,
background of bloke on a sofa amid brown furniture.

Press of a dog's body along my thigh,
weight of the paperback in my hand.
At last I am slowed down to read,
a bedsit student again, late hours on the sofa.

Ann Carter Black feather

Hush-a-bye baby, hush-a-bye
Sleep sweet to my lullaby melody
Dream of your place in the galaxy
Safe from the chains of old slavery
May your life be filled with sweet harmony
And your fantasy never lack sanity
May you never be plagued by poverty
May you reach for the stars as your destiny...



“It’s been a great project for me, like a kick in the pants - I was in danger of withdrawing into myself.”

25, 26, 27

LEX ALLISON

Hand stitched, couched yarn, felt, buttons, press studs



28 & 29

ANONYMOUS

Hand stitched, sequins, cotton and metallic threads



“I had never thought about stars before. I’m pleased when they twinkle back at me now.”

30

ANONYMOUS

Hand stitched, cotton threads.

31

ANONYMOUS

Hand stitched, buttons

“Psalms 147:4 says ‘He counts the number of the stars, He calls all of them by name.’”

32

ANONYMOUS

Hand stitched, applique, cotton threads

“The project took me back to a childhood book about a small girl who goes up into the sky and plays among the stars before sliding down a moon beam to return home.”

33

ANONYMOUS

Hand stitched, reverse applique, cotton threads, sequins

34

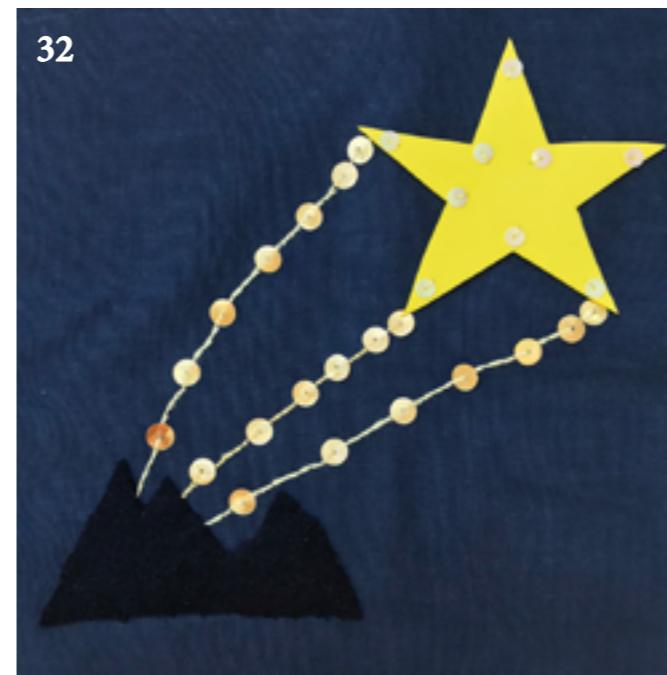
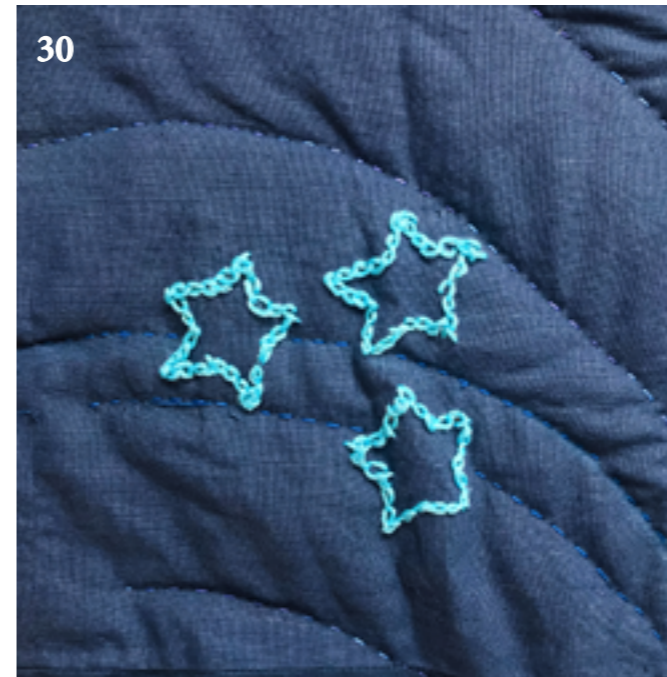
ANONYMOUS

Hand stitched, reverse applique, cotton threads, sequins

35

ANONYMOUS

Hand stitched, applique, beading, cotton threads



36

ANONYMOUS

Hand stitched, applique, cotton threads

37

DOREEN ANDREWS

Hand stitched, silver threads, sequins

38

JOAN BEADSMOORE

Hand stitched & applique, cotton threads, organza fabric

39

JOAN BEADSMOORE

Hand stitched & applique, cotton threads, organza fabric,
beading

The Nebula, from the Hubble Telescope.

40

JOAN BEADSMOORE

Hand stitched & applique, cotton threads

41

JOAN BEADSMOORE

Hand stitched & applique, cotton threads



42

BEV

Hand stitched, cotton threads

43

BEV

Hand stitched, applique, sequins, cotton and metallic threads

44

LOIS BLACKBURN

Hand stitched, cotton threads

45

LOIS BLACKBURN

Hand stitched, cotton threads, silk fabric

46

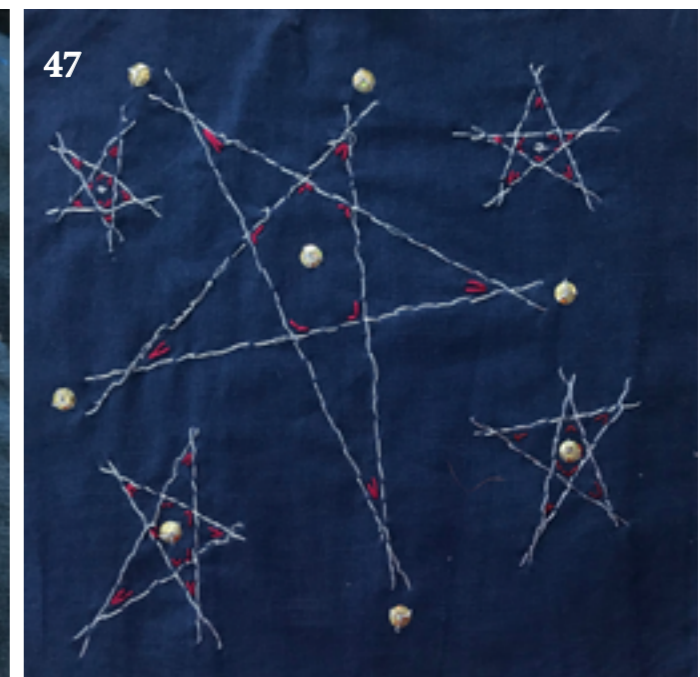
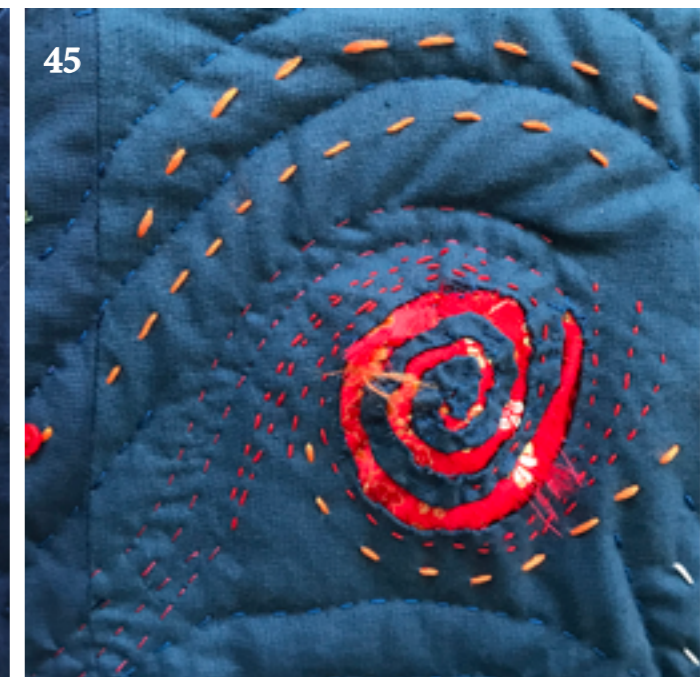
GLENIS BOLTON

Hand stitched, applique, cotton threads, beading, aida fabric

47

SHEILA BOOTH

Hand stitched, silver threads, sequins



Tricia Clough

Soul searching

Star card ancient old
Dark nights divine reflections
Iced kiss Heaven scent

Lorna Dexter

Moon

I'm a path of light across your room,
up the wall, into the mirror and out again
through the open window, into the garden

now a negative, shadow on shadow on black.
I'll sit on a branch with the owl, show him
the hummocking mole, slip in and out between trees -

I'm a flitter, a flibbertigibbet, play hide-and-peek
with your certainties. On the twenty-eighth day I'll be gone,
your world will turn black, you'll walk into a door,

stub your toe in the darkness, and the owl will call,
a lunatic cry, from the asylum up on the hill,
night after night. But if you look out, look up

you'll see my new crescent, delicate, small
in the overall blackness, a fragile sign -
and you'll know I'm on my way back.

L.E.

The summers ahead

How have things changed? Trust has changed, because more is hanging on it. Some people can be trusted more than others. Some family members will stay safe within their bubble, some won't — or can't. For some people, the NHS is heroic, for others who couldn't attend the death of relatives, they've lost trust in it. And what about trust in politicians? The politicians waited last year, trying to leave the difficult decisions 'til this year. A bigger lockdown could've happened a year ago. We have a Prime Minister who takes his time, but time is life. So many people have died in the hospitals. I'd be surprised if Covid has gone this year, what with the variants and the politicians.

My advice is to fill your mind with other things. Reading, writing, radio, TV. Go out if you can. People are dreaming of holidays, but that can't be right now. The only thing you can possibly say is — it won't last forever. Have hope — and look forward to the summers ahead...

“I've written from the perspective of how we've experienced life in the last few months of the pandemic. As an older person, in isolation, **wanting my voice to be heard.**”

“I'm still tired, but feeling positive now. I really appreciate this... When life has been harsh to deal with, it's helped.”

“It just lifts everything. You lose yourself in it. Everything melts away.”

48

ANN CARTER

Hand stitched, applique, cotton threads, sequins

49

FRAN COHEN

Hand stitched, applique, cotton threads

Inspired by the Perry Como song 'Catch a Falling Star'

50

MARGARET GILLER

Hand stitched, beading

51

MARGARET GOSLEY

Hand stitched, applique

52

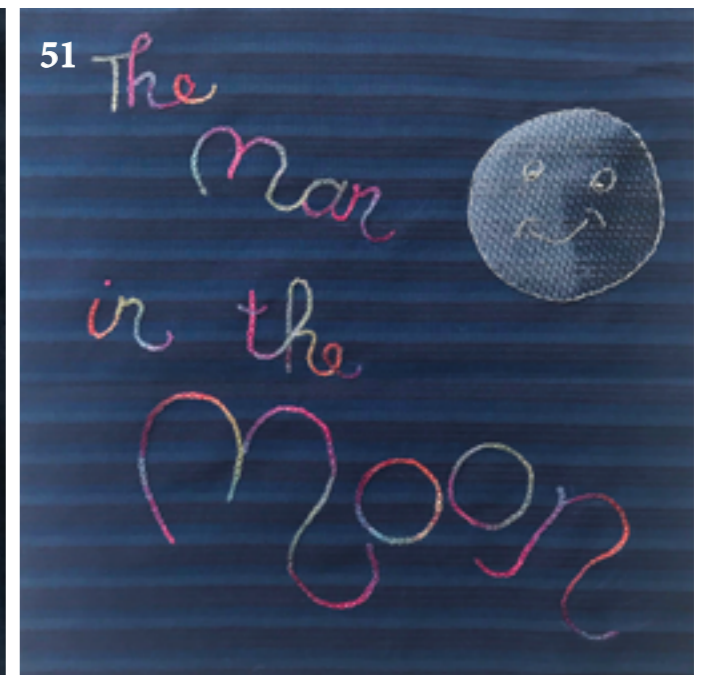
SOPHIE GUEST

Hand stitched, cotton threads, sequins

53

PAT GYONGYOSI

Hand stitched, cotton threads, buttons



Margaret Gosley

Dandelion time

Part I

Invading gardens
littering the roadsides
dandelions wait to tell the time
The tick tock of the clock
releasing seed heads,
thoughts that fly.
Its bare pincushion head exposed
reveals a Fibonacci spiral
nothing random here.

Part II

My thoughts take root,
bed down in my house,
the collected chaos of myself
in notebooks and files,
the library of my life.
How shall I bring order?
Unlike the dandelion
my life has been
without a grand design
no Fibonacci sequence.

You blow the dandelion to
the tick tock of your own time
letting your seeds of thought fly.
I pressed my wild flowers
into heavy books
catalogued on library shelves,
crushing out the colour,
wanting to hold them fast.
I fitted passion into form
hoping to make it last.
Love and marriage
the one fought the other
the other always won.
My daughter you are the flowering
of that explosive mix, grown up,
unafraid to puff your cheeks.

Part III

Your
seeds fly
through my door
opening windows in my house
as you wait for me to come outside
inviting me to take another chance at life
and blow the dandelion clock.

Author's note:

I think it's helped me deal with lockdown. It's helped me sound out what I'm thinking. I've been chasing a little flicker of understanding. Trying to think and digest and let it filter in. Or else you drown in your own thoughts, don't you? If you're left alone with them too long.

Linda Goulden

The Sales Clerk's Dream

In sight of the tallboys of light haberdashery,
I will unburden my body of messages,
rip up my sales graph, loosen my lanyard,
unbutton the dustcoat of toil.

Under the counter of customer service,
I will remove every workaday overshoe,
bend to unfasten the afternoon lacing
and tighten the skate wheels of night.

Past boardroom and bathroom, lift shaft and stairway,
water dispenser and restaurant door,
I will roll into furlough with one eye propped open,
and wink on the slippery brink of a stare.

At the edges of edges, departments, arenas,
my lovers will pirouette, spiral and glide
through stages of limelight in arcades of flicker,
inviting me into the frame.

In mittens, in mufflers, in moonsleeves at midnight,
we will dance to the beep of a satellite tune,
eloping at dawn, in crepuscular slippers,
slow waltzing from March until June.

Jackie

Star Travellers

Oh how the stars have shaped our lives
We gaze upon history.
See -

Great ancient cultures were born
Of their worship
Of celestial ancestors

Rediscovered over generations
To be themselves revered as epic
Monuments to lost civilisations.

We gaze upon the same
Wondrous interstellar light show
As did the

Pharaohs, Aztecs, Maya; we gaze upon history
As we strive to join our brethren
The sky gods.

Deb Jackson

Gran's wallpaper

We went to live with me Gran
Me grandad was there and all
So with them, me and my mam
The bungalow seemed quite small,

The lounge were a straight-through affair
At the bottom end, a sofa and seating
And I got sent over there
When adult talk got heated.

Scandal, gossip, and all that caper
Flooded me ears all day
While I sat staring at me Gran's wallpaper
Soaking in what adults had to say.

That paper were not for my eyes to meet
Clashing colours, brown, orange and red
Like something out of Coronation Street
But without flying ducks overhead.

Heavily embossed with swirls and bumps
That I picked with glee
I'd spend hours pressing down the lumps
While no one took notice of me.

One day me grandad the great maker
Came in with his ladders and paint pot
He got rid of me grandma's wallpaper
And slapped pale blue over the lot.

Jaye

Dreaming the dream

I felt the sun beating down
As I lay on the Bondi Beach
Felt the breeze caressing me
As I basked in the sultry heat.

I adjusted my bikini and
Pinned up my golden hair
I heard the chink of glasses
A Campari perhaps for me?

Then my carer gently said,
"Here's a cup of tea."
And I awoke to a wintery day
In the reality of the UK.

Glen Mulliner

Castle Sleep

It was tranquil in the turrets,
there was calm within the keep
and all was quiet and peaceful
in the castle called Sleep.

The king was in slumber,
the queen in her bower
and the soldiers and the sentries
were sleepwalking on the tower.

Sadly the gatekeeper,
after drinking, got in late,
and being somewhat sozzled,
forgot to lock the gate.

So in sneaked a jester
a man of sparkling wit
who, looking for a place to play,
decided this was it.

He crept up to the courtyard
and hid behind a tree,
and fired up his bagpipes —
sounded like a giant bee.

The sentries dropped like dominoes,
the king fell out of bed,
and the queen jumped up suddenly
and dented crown and head.

The jester kept on playing
until his lungs were sore
but when they found his hideout
he was politely shown the door —

Well, actually — a window on the moat
and the water there was deep.
They watched the bagpipes floating
then they all went back to Sleep.

Gill Ormond

Starsperience

The air is light
Bright on my skin
The starsperience won't show
The air is frisky
My life shines
Yet I stay huddled and small.

54

PATRICIA HARDING

Hand stitched, applique, beading, cotton threads

55

LIZ

Hand stitched, cotton threads

56

ANDREA LEWIS

Hand stitched, cotton threads

57

MARYLYN MACLENNAN

Hand stitched, cotton threads

58

JEAN MILLER

Hand stitched, cotton threads

59

SHEILA MOLYNEUX

Hand stitched, applique, metallic threads, sequins



60

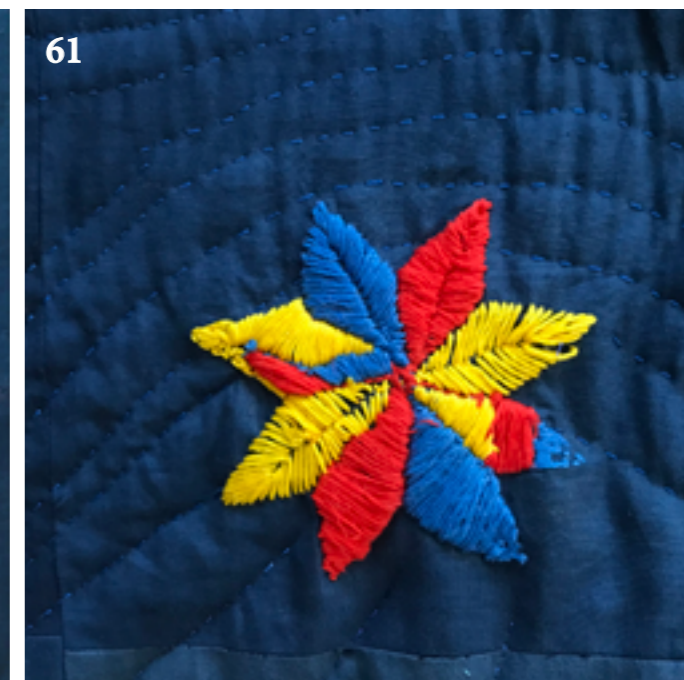
MARGARET NEWMAN

Feltwork, applique, sequins

“I am registered blind, and only learnt to felt in January this year. I am self taught and felt by touch. My daughter helps me to make sure I have not missed anything.”



61



61

MICHAEL

Hand stitched, cotton threads

62

ELIZABETH PICKIN

Hand stitched, cotton and metallic threads

63

PATRICIA PLANT

Hand stitched, cotton threads

“A picture of the night sky, 21st December 2020”



64

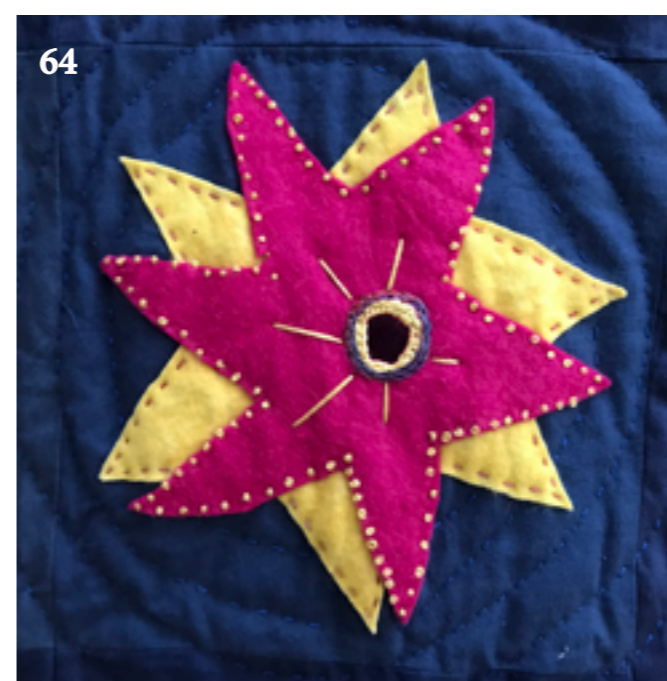
PATRICIA SALES

Hand stitched, applique, cotton threads, mirror work

65

PATRICIA SALES

Hand stitched, applique, buttons



“It’s taking my thoughts off what’s going on, that really helps... I want things to keep me occupied.”

“I’m so down this morning. I had to turn the news off, it was making me feel tight chested.”

“Art is beginning to be very important...”

“Now, in the eleventh month of being locked down and isolated with almost all of my other activities suspended,
I have almost become a full time writer.”



66

GILL ORMOND

Hand stitched, cotton threads

Jo Page

Reasons to be a Rebel

Reflecting on life in my bunker, away from the sky during lockdown, has allowed feelings and thoughts buried deep to come to the surface. Until now my life was one of conformity, politeness, working, paying taxes and being an upright member of society. Trying to be an accepted member of the community, listening to views but rarely voicing mine for fear of upsetting people. I wonder if I have become a sheep, wanting to be liked at the cost of losing my identity?

Agitation stirs within and realisation dawns. Feelings of rebellion bubble to the surface, time has come to break free from the constraints imposed voluntarily and be free. Boring and safe need to be replaced by daring and living life to its full. It's time to be a rebel and stand out from the crowd, to fight for what I believe in and not be frightened to express my views. Rebelling will bring value to my life, breaking routine, creating magic and excitement. All good reasons to be a rebel, 123...

Drink pepsi from a coke bottle
Seven people meet in a house
Sit in a pub after 10
Sing and dance inside a building
Walk the opposite way in a one-way supermarket
Eat After 8 Mints before eight
Touch what can't be touched

Author's note:

This whole project is called Necklace of Stars – for me the stars are treading the way forward, leading us out of despair. For people who are forgotten, if you create, demonstrate or rebel, then everyone else is reminded – you still exist.

Jenny P

Midnight in Blueberry Wood

Midnight, Midnight. Midnight in Blueberry Wood Mystical Worlds, we only dream of

A midnight walk in Blueberry Wood, listen and you will hear
The sound of playful laughter, ringing in your ear.
Glow worms twinkle in the trees
and spiders webs are spun
So hold your breath and hide yourself,
to watch the evening's fun.

Midnight, Midnight. Midnight in Blueberry Wood Mystical Worlds, we only dream of

The fire burns so brightly in a perfect fairy ring
And sitting on a fallen log three tiny mice will sing.
Moths and bats and fireflies
join forces in the air
Woodland creatures scurry by
All tiny souls are there

Midnight, Midnight. Midnight in Blueberry Wood Mystical Worlds, we only dream of

Author's note:

Someone once said (in fun) — “You are small and insignificant.” I laughed it off at the time, but it's not how it really felt when you have anxiety, depression etc. I started to write down how that had made me feel – and opened a floodgate of thoughts and words, Now after many years of self doubt, I actually like the person I have become. I still make mistakes and dwell too much on the past, but my writing helps.

Richard Star-sent Lullaby

The star exploded in a distant galaxy
Expanding in a sphere of radiant power,
Propelling waves of light through space and time
And turning their momentum into song.
They saw the evolution of our Earth,
And cast their light on our dark history;
They led a strange procession into Bethlehem
And soothed a saviour child to smiling slumber.
And still their star-song shields our sleeping children
From our history, which enslaves us from our birth.
It leads us through the myriad stars of heaven
To the birth pangs of the light that brought us life;
Leading all things to their beginning,
Transforming nightmares into future dreams.

Neil Sessions The heart of the moon

How many of us have stood alone
With our thoughts and feelings
And gazed into this vast expanse
We call the universe?
I have, with my aching bones and my troubled mind
And I've asked the question — why?
Why does the moon beckon to me
What is this force that is pulling my gaze upon it?
Its a-luminous appeal
And surface scarred by time
Its craters remind me of the moment
The asteroids struck its heart
But we still both shine.
How the stars wink at me —
Are they calling me, playing a game,
Or simply looking down?
Maybe guiding me to better times.
I take heart when the sun starts to rise
Life itself is enriched by its warmth and energy
It shines so bright.
Now I have the answer why.
Do you?

Author's note:

Actually I'm dyslexic, it's why they called me stupid at school, but I'm qualified to write this. What we have got to communicate as human beings is more important than spelling it correctly.

I invite people to do what it says in this poem, to take time to look at the sky, to look at the whole universe, and gaze and ask why. We are going through some terrible times and we need to take stock. I understand, I used to do it after my wife died. I carry the whole night sky in my memory, I close my eyes and I see it all. And I'm still asking it questions. Asking why, asking why.

Anne Roberts

Natterjacks

Softly I climb into my bed
And gently rest my weary head
Through the curtain a moonbeam creeps
And watches me as I fall asleep.

Waves lapping round our feet. And it was, oh it was lovely, because the heat of the day subsided. Which is, you know, it had been one of those very hot days. The sound of the sea was lovely, even that sort of seemed to cool us and there was just that slight cooling from a little breeze that came off the sea as well. It was a really sort of magical moment that.

Waves lapping softly on the shore at night
Moonlight smiling down on us. Moonlight so bright
Soft sounds of water rippling at our feet.
Cool breezes soothe our souls and break the drowsy heat.
The starry sky looks down. A myriad of lights dance round.

Like the starry sky above
A myriad of lights (dance by us)
Natterjacks eyes so bright
Natterjacks eyes so bright
Natterjacks eyes so bright
Light our way back home on this magical night.

As we walked along suddenly I become aware of what I thought were little lights, in the sand dunes and then there was more and more of them. An absolute myriad of lights and they started moving about in a sort of crazy manner almost like a dance.

Natterjacks dance to a silent tune in the pale moonlight
Oh what a wondrous sight on that magical night
Softly I climb into my bed and gently rest my weary head
Through the curtain a moonbeam creeps and watches me as I fall asleep
It smiles upon my sleeping face as I dream of the Natterjacks in that magical place.

As I climb into my bed and rest my weary head (I dream of...)
Natterjacks eyes so bright, (so bright,)
Natterjacks eyes so bright, (so bright,)
Natterjacks eyes so bright, (so bright,)
Light our way back home on this magical night.

And then one of them said 'oh yes I know what they are. It's Natterjacks. They're Natterjacks.' I'd never heard of them you know. Natterjacks are little tiny toads and at that time there was a huge colony of them apparently in the dunes at Harlech beach. They come out at night and their eyes glow in the dark like these wonderful magical little lights.

Author's note:

This is the first time I've written songs. The process took me through stages until I was not afraid to do it. I got drawn in. Songwriting is such a lovely way to look at words.

Tony Shelton

A memory alphabet (extract)

A for Aeroplanes. I drew hundreds, but only going from right to left.

Birds. I knew only blackbirds, sparrows, pigeons, robins on Christmas cards, and the starlings which invaded to summer feast on next door's overgrown cherry tree. All the rest came much later. I was a city boy.

Class. "What class are we?" I asked my father as he read his Daily Telegraph. "Working class, he replied in a flash and turned to the Daily Mirror. It was good enough for me.

Death. When the old king died, I didn't know what to feel. What was he to me? When my father died, I didn't know what to feel. He just never came home from hospital. I think I am now ready to get to know my father...

Author's note:

Writing takes a big chunk of my day, it's very important to me just now. What am I writing? I'm living in the past, not the recent past which is full of grief for me, but the past of childhood. I've stepped beyond the grief and gone right back to something that's relatively harmless. And going back to these memories helps me to know myself, I see aspects of the child that are in me today... These things have been in my head for decades, but they've been asleep. Now I'm awakening.

Sylvia Simmons, with Tricia, Linda, Pam

The Universe is Sweet

Meteors explode in Sherbet Fountains
Stars are spilling out in hundreds and thousands
The universe expands in spangles of sweetness
A craggy comet sits in a puddle of treacle.

Chorus

It's a hush lush chocolate night

A kali rainbow in a liquorice sky

It's a hush lush chocolate night

Freewheeling into space we are cowgirls
Licking chocolate off the edges of our wagon wheels
We like to think we are cocktail sophisticates
Waving red-dipped tips of our sweet cigarettes.

Chorus

[Sylvia:] Poets and storytellers have often written about stars
They say wish upon a star and you will get your wish
I look out of my window each night and if I see stars
That's a nice thought to go to sleep with.

Rhymes about stars are part of childhood
Starlight, star bright, the very first star I see tonight...

It's all a mystery
But we'll defy the gravity
And float away in harmony

The universe is sweet because I licked her lips
The Milky Way tastes good like a sherbert dip
Flying saucers spin they are fizzing past
A sticky, syrup moon I'm gonna make this last

Chorus

Paula E. Tate

Skylark

Oh such pleasure from your songs
Listening to your silver tongues
Let me ride upon your wings
Hearing all the joys you bring.

Or I shall float as a cloud
Side-by-side with you reside?
For all the treasures of the world
Do not compare to thee
as none has thy sweet harmony.

And I shall polish stars at night
The moon will beam with sheer delight
But only when the skylark sings
Dancing round a million springs
for my heart's a-flutter, a sky of wings.

“I’ve enjoyed doing it. It brought up a few things that I took for granted, that I couldn’t do now. The needle threading, and hands that don’t work so well.

But it all came together in the end.”

“It hasn’t been a burden, it must be the way you handle it, you’ve been so gentle. It’s been nice working with you.”

“I have never had this feeling before, where I have let the poem take me over. This time I’ve trusted it and jumped in.”

“The whole thing has been so good for me - it’s been emotional for me.”

67

PAMELA WALKER

Hand stitched, applique

They led me to the door that night
To view the heavens above
“You see the brightest twinkling star
That is your Granddad, sending love.”



68

PAMELA WALKER

Hand stitched, applique, cotton & metallic threads, sequins

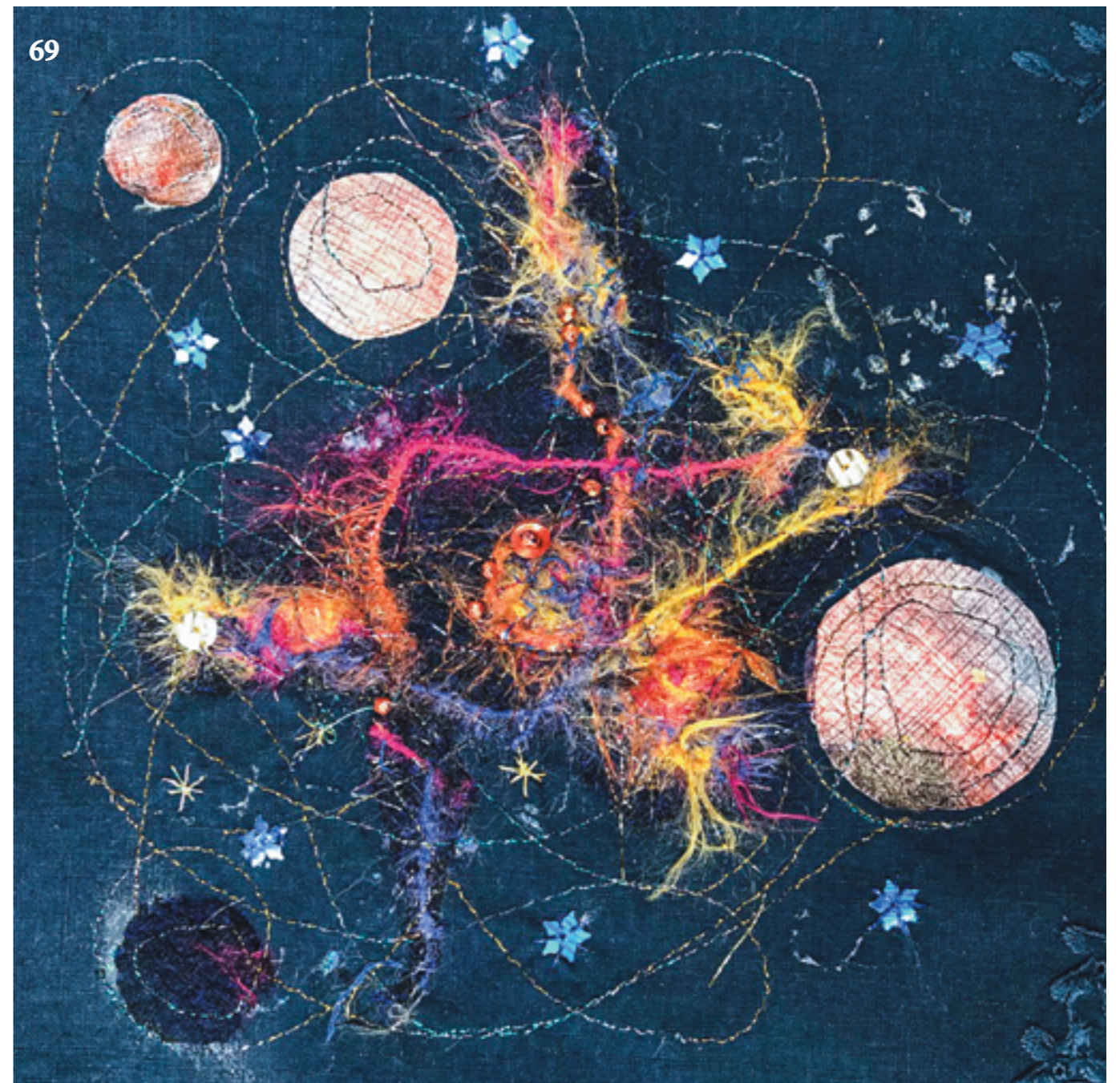
‘Each month Moon traverses the skies and throws out threads
of moonbeams to catch the newest stars. She takes them to
a special place where they can stay together for eternity,
forming a new constellation. A family of stars. No one is
lonely in the heavens.’

69

PAMELA WALKER

Hand stitched, cotton threads, sequins

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry
host by the breath of his mouth. Psalm 33.6





70

71

72

73

70

PATRICIA WALKER

Hand stitched, applique, cotton threads, sequins, buttons

71

JEAN WELLS

Hand stitched, cotton and metallic threads

72

JOAN WILMOT

Hand stitched, applique, sequins, metallic thread

73

JOAN WILMOT

Hand stitched, applique, beading, metallic thread

Linda Goulden Night is a Forest

[Sung a cappella]

Oh stars are inviting and moon's enticing
Night is a forest where dreams may roam
but as I grow older the nights turn colder.
I dream a sunrise to carry me home.

Oh, stars they are inviting and the moon's enticing
night time is a forest where dreams roam
but as you grow older nights they will turn colder.
So dream yourself a sunrise to carry you home.

**I will wait till sundown
I will wait till moonrise
I will wait till midnight
before I sleep. before I sleep.**

And when the sun wakes you a new day awaits you
Open up your eyes love, morning's here
We'll wave to the trees love and breathe in the breeze love
We'll sing with the birds and be glad to be here
Singing with the bird song, glad to be here

**I will wait till sundown
I will wait till moonrise
I will wait till midnight
before I sleep. before I sleep.**



MARGARET GILLER

Hand stitched, beading

Creating the Quilt

Lois Blackburn Lead Artist

This is an artwork to bring comfort, security, calm and contentment, to tuck safely under, as you listen to soothing lullabies.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.

Making art can be frightening, so it's useful to have clear starting points. Vintage bed sheets and pillowcases were dyed shades of the night sky and placed with instructions, threads and needles in Creative Packs, sent in the post to participants.

Everyone brought their personality and skills to their work. Many hadn't created art since school, so I supported them to try something new or revisit old skills. Some struggled over every stitch, frustrated by their declining skills and a lack of confidence. Some were confident art makers, but reported fuzzy heads, lack of inspiration and motivation, resulting from Covid restrictions. All reported a great sense of satisfaction on completion. For many it re-ignited creativity.

Days when I received these precious parcels in the post felt like Christmas. Squares were pinned to my wall, the stars starting to dance. Then it was my turn to pin and unpin, to try compositions, playing with colour, size, texture. Once patchworked together, I quilted, trying to echo the movement of stars.

Quilt making is a perfect vehicle to bring diverse artwork together, we can work on our artworks independently in our own homes, with our art coming together as a part of something much bigger, a quilt of stars.

Creating the Poems

[Philip Davenport](#) Lead Writer

Their poems appeared in my Inbox each day — funny, sad, thoughtful, kind-hearted. Some of them pasted a grin on my face, others touched me beyond words. The long phone conversations echoed in me for a long time after the talking ended.

For many in this project, lockdown made isolated lives even more isolated. On the face of it, we had peace, an ever-stretching holiday. But underneath was fear — of infection, of unemployment, fear of those around us, fear stoked by the media...

And yet birds were singing, the air purer than it had been in decades, the roar of traffic and the thunder of aeroplanes quietened. The timid creatures that we share our world with started to assert themselves again, carparks became wildlife habitats, the woods and moors a sunshine paradise.

Necklace of Stars reflected the strange doubleness of this time. People threw themselves into making poems and songs, dug deep, took journeys into their deeper selves.

Slowing down to the intricate pace of a poem or an embroidery brings time to meditate and find a richer texture in the whole of life. Creativity not only depicts the exterior world, it also reflects inner life to make it richer, brighter. And such are the stars we steer by.

Creating the Lullabies

[Matt Hill](#) Songwriter

Lullabies are an ancient form of song. Dark, mysterious tunes sung from parent to child. Songs sung at those inbetween moments when light turns to darkness. Songs to spellbind, soothe and above all to bring sleep.

When the great pandemic hit us, we found ourselves in a kind of sleep. Normal service was interrupted, and we slipped into a twilight zone. And from that place came these songs.

When you listen, you will hear voices recorded down a phone line. Voices coming from a place of isolation. From my loft studio in Derbyshire, I was also in isolation - shielding from the virus. These phone calls, these songs formed a point of connection. Our voices united in purpose. To create these lullabies.

Our words came from the threads of poems, some already woven but others twisted into something new. Song lyrics weaved into music. The lyrics of lullabies warn of dangers, they tell of mystical worlds and creatures, they explore the night sky and they promote the importance of rest (as opposed to productivity). You'll find all of these themes and more explored in these songs.

So hush now, be still and listen.

Lullabies

Tracklist A Necklace of Stars

[01. Night is a Forest](#)

[07. The Universe is Sweet](#)

[02. Circling the World](#)

[08. Dandelion Time](#)

[03. Natterjacks](#)

[09. Madam Moon](#)

[04. Life Seems Quite Perfect](#)

[10. Look for the Door](#)

[05. Blueberry Woods](#)

[11. Day is Almost Done](#)

[06. Sailing the Sky](#)

[12. Sleeping Child](#)

Click on the Track title to hear the song.
It will link you to Matt Hills Soundcloud website.

About the artists

Between 2007-2022 **Lois Blackburn** co-directed and led the art of nationally recognised arts organisation arthur+martha CIC. She's exhibited locally, nationally, internationally, both collaboratively and solo projects; from bingo halls to the Houses of Parliament.

Lois creates art that supports people; coming together to relax, laugh, cry, find a little solace. Projects share ways to overcome adversity, that frame experiences in new ways, to understand, share & celebrate.

Philip Davenport's poems appear in books, art galleries, recordings, performances, shop windows and billposted in the streets. His projects question social inequality and emotional dis/engagement. He frequently collaborates with people pushed to the edges of society - particularly when he co-directed arthur+martha CIC 2007-22.

He has exhibited, broadcast and curated nationally and internationally: at Whitechapel Gallery, the Southbank, Henry Moore Institute, Summerhall in Edinburgh, in streets and tea houses in China, and a church in Berlin...

Matt Hill is a songwriting artist who loves to work with people who would not otherwise be writing songs. He uses themes of shared history or culture to creatively explore our memories and life stories, making songs people want to connect with.

Arts Derbyshire is the strategic arts charity for the county. Their main aim is to enrich people's lives through the arts. They work with artists, service providers and the public to provide strategic direction for the arts in Derbyshire, to enable collaborative working for arts development, and to encourage people to take part in the arts.



Acknowledgements

With thanks to [Arts Council England](#), [Derbyshire County Council Public Health](#), [Arts Derbyshire](#) and [Derbyshire Library Services](#) for funding and support, without whom this project would not have been possible.

To our artists, [Lois Blackburn](#), [Philip Davenport](#) and [Matt Hill](#): thank you for bringing such a wealth of skills and experience to this project, and for your kindness, resilience and care throughout such a challenging time for all.

Thank you to all [Arts Derbyshire](#) and [Derbyshire County Council](#) staff, who have helped to steer and take good care of this project:

[Ann Wright](#), Head of Arts, Derbyshire County Council
[Helena Reynolds](#), Arts and Health Coordinator, [Arts Derbyshire](#)
[Rachel Massey](#), Interim Arts and Health Coordinator, [Arts Derbyshire](#)
[Sally Roberts](#), [Charlotte Mackie](#) and [Nicky Bellenger](#), A Necklace of Stars Project Coordinators, [Arts Derbyshire](#)

Finally, and most importantly a heartfelt thanks to all the people who participated and took the long journey with us through lockdowns and darkness, to find some lightness.

- **Design and Photography:** [Lois Blackburn](#)

[Derbyshire County Council](#) took over responsibility for Public Health from the NHS in April 2013. This means that they are responsible for making sure there are a wide range of services available to help people in Derbyshire to stay healthy. They do this by commissioning, or buying in, certain services from other organisations.

[Derbyshire Library Service](#) provides books, information, computer access and activities in 45 libraries, 2 mobile libraries and a home delivery service throughout the County.

Participants

Artists, creative writers
and songwriters/performers

Lex Allison

Doreen Andrews

Anonymous x 7

Joan Beadsmoore

Bev

Glenis Bolton

Sheila Booth

Maxine Broadbent

Pam Butler

Ann Carter

Tricia Clough

Fran Cohen

Lorna Dexter

L.E.

Margaret Giller

Margaret Gosley

Michael

Sophie Guest

Pat Gyongyosi

Patricia Harding

Andrea Lewis

Liz

Marylyn MacLennan

Jean Miller

Sheila Molyneux

Glen Mulliner

Margaret Newman

Gill Ormond

Jackie

Deb Jackson

Jaye

Jo Page

Jenny P

Valarie Payne

Patricia Plant

Richard

Anne Roberts

Anne Saunders

Patricia Sales

Neil Sessions

Tony Shelton

T.S.

Sylvia Simmons

Paula E. Tate

Pamela Walker

Patricia Walker

Jean Wells

Joan Wilmot

A Necklace of Stars

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN
ARTS DERBYSHIRE, DERBYSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEALTH,
DERBYSHIRE HOME LIBRARY
SERVICE AND ARTISTS LOIS
BLACKBURN, PHILIP DAVENPORT
AND MATT HILL, SUPPORTED BY
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND.