

PREVIEWS

Say hello to Clive

Ceramics, stone and Perspex, as well as hair, cosmetics and scrap metal, all have a place in this textiles show.

The first exhibit to greet visitors as they enter the National Centre for Craft and Design in Sleaford is Daisy Collingridge's challenging sculpture, *Portrait of Clive*. It's a pink and grey fat suit made of layered wadding, covered in stretch jersey that she stitches together in a free machine-quilting technique using simple running stitch. Collingridge studied fashion, and interned at Louis Vuitton, but now uses her skills to question our attitude to body types with these large, wearable pieces that she calls 'the art of the squishy'.

It's a fitting start to an exhibition, *Ctrl/Shift: New Directions in Textile Art* at the National Centre for Craft & Design (2 February – 22 April), that demonstrates how the medium is one in which the issues of our times – from faith and activism, to the environment and the workplace – can be explored. The show also puts paid to any lingering notion that textile art is about careful stitching on fabrics.

The curator Liz Cooper had wanted to work with the 62 Group for a while – an artist-led organisation established in 1962 to push the boundaries of textile art. For this show, she has selected 30 works by 25 of its members. 'One of the most

exciting outcomes,' she says, 'was seeing how people play with scale as well as materials. Caren Garfen, for example, often makes room-sized installations, but here the diminutive nature of the work conveys a feeling of helplessness.'

Garfen's installation, which consists of rows of tiny doll's house beds, deals with the complicated relationship between those with eating disorders and the NHS. The beds create an endless hospital ward, each one as different as every individual who is struggling with the condition.

Jane McKeating is known for large-scale wall pieces in print and embroidery, but here she has created a major work with many component parts. When her father died and her mother moved to a care home, McKeating found a multitude of domestic textile products in their now empty house – from dishcloths to handkerchiefs and towels – and used them as a canvas to tell their story.

Cooper's aim was to demonstrate the power of textile art in creating narratives, as well as showing the artists' ability to explore original ideas and experiment with new techniques. With work that includes basketry, found objects and digital interventions, the textile realm seems to be one of infinite possibilities.

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Left: Daisy Collingridge, *Portrait of Clive*, 2017.
Right: Caren Garfen, *Room for Improvement*, 2018



