

Jacky Puzey Artist's Statement 2016

From feral lace to embellished creatures, from feathered interior screens to shimmering metallic bomber jackets, my embroidery creates new fabrics, textures and stories.

Combining traditional craft skills with digital technology, I use fur, feathers, tweed and organza as well as drawing, laser cutting and digital embroidery to explore a baroque pleasure in imagery and style.

For my Hand & Lock Prize 2015, I created what I call 'feral lace' for a dress crafted almost entirely from embroidery, including appliquéd fur, three dimensional padding, and transfer printing onto traditional embroidered motifs to subvert and reinvent the lace fabrics used across West Africa into a 'Nigerian Riot Girl' look. I was inspired by the #Bringbackourgirls campaign to remember the kidnapped Chibok girls, and I fused that with the glamour and edginess of an African megacity and animals and motifs from Nigerian Yoruba and Hausa cultures.

Within my work, ideas and materials spark off each other; I am drawn to the compelling hybrid cultures of the postcolonial world, where the act of reclaiming traditional textiles becomes a political battleground of identity and modernity, and emerging fashion cultures challenge and re-perform global styles. As author Chinamanda Ngozi Adichie has noted, 'Culture does not make people. People make Culture.'

My current embroidery collection features a series of interior screens and wallhangings. Migrating creatures, from escaped parakeets to foxes and hares, are shown within their new urban environments to create a beautiful meditation on 'wild' cities and diverse urban cultures in England. The urban fox is a masked burglar, adaptive to traditional English gardens. The hare drinks from a forgotten corner of the pond in the park, camping out in semi-public space. Parakeets and feral budgerigars mingle with the local starlings across an embroidered fabric wallpaper. An embellished raven, created from layers of real feathers, laser cutting and richly textured embroidery threads, becomes a tale of monarchy and anarchy, sporting a crown and clutching dead roses. The embroideries bring alive shifting cultural allegiances; they reference both a 19th c British tradition of allegorical still life painting, which used fruits and animals perceived as indigenous, contrasted with a 'flashy' invading parrot or rotting pomegranate, and update that to create complex contemporary embellished narratives of urban migration and landscape.