

## in conversation with Mary Kroetsch

Tatjana Blinja "Warriors." Textile / Art: And Now For Something Completely Different!

While the title of the show that took place at It's Not A Deli Art Gallery in Toronto, Ontario this past October is a bit Monty Python-ish, it seemed appropriate to the vision of its Curator, Mary Kroetsch. Her vision stemmed from the question often posed during conversations; "Textile Art, Art?"

Alison Hodson "Brickworks"

In her last career that spanned 20 years, Mary lived out of a suitcase working as a Training and Documentation Specialist in the Information Technology Industry. "There were many lonely hours to fill when not working with my clients and I filled these by going to galleries, studio tours and of course I never traveled without a needle and thread." What Mary often found was that her passion and interest to explore Textile Art, was threadbare so to speak. Oh there were Installation Projects and there were Guilds and Associations offering a quick look at Textile Art forms, but as a potential collector, and a wanna be Maker, most events made the work inaccessible. It was large, it was odd, it was not for sale. And if it was for sale, well the price prevented her from looking for her wallet.

In November 2003, Mary decided to move out of her suitcase and start working on her own ideas of the Textile Art form. But the problem as a Maker is that there are a limited number of places where Textile Art can be seen. And the competition amongst us to be seen in those few places of honour is tough.

Sandra Smirle "Are You With Me"

"I believe we deserve to be seen in proper Commercial Galleries and to be displayed with other mediums. Why must we continue to be so cliche in our endeavours to be seen?" she asks. "Isn't it time we branched out?" But Mary says it is going to take some education to get not only the galleries to take an interest, but the public needs to see that what we do is Art and that it can hang next to that dreamy oil painting in their living rooms.

Mary has started the education by seeking out Alternative Venues like the It's Not A Deli Art Gallery which is half gallery and half restaurant. A few years ago we would have never considered this venue as our Art is precious and cigarette smoke and food odours are feared to be brutal to the work. But if we want people to invest in and collect Textile Art, they need to be able to visualize it in their home environment where the same conditions may apply and maybe include sticky children's fingers or drooling pets.

Heidi Pivnick "Full Bloom"

"I also wanted to make sure that the Textile Art was seen next to other mediums and so I invited Mixed Media Artists using textile techniques in their work to participate." In Mary's travels and searches for Textile Art she has come to realize that Artists in every medium are embracing both traditional and innovative textile techniques in their work. Visual Artists and Fine Craft Artisans are exploring by adding a stitch here, a piece of fabric there, and bringing centuries old ideas to contemporary and conceptual art forms. The exhibit was a resounding success. 16 Artists participated. And the reception by viewers was very positive. One woman commented that she loved Textile Art, but had never seen the kind of work we were displaying before. "She told me", says Mary. "she would be looking at the Art Form completely different in the future". And a veteran and well-respected Artist, Marion Spanjerdt, also commented on how nice it was to see Textile Art being displayed in a real gallery setting. Christine Mockett "Oil Pithoi" What was great about using this Alternative Venue was the exposure the show had. The Deli is open Monday to Saturday from 11:00 am to 8:00 pm and is brilliantly located in Toronto's popular Art and Design District on Queen Street West. Plus patrons often stayed for a coffee or a sandwich and really spent some time with the works. "This show was an important baby step to making contact with the Marketplace." The owners of the gallery were very pleased

with the amount of new customers they now call regulars because of the exhibit and have invited Mary to Curate a part two of this event later this year. In the meantime, Mary is working on two other events to bring Textile Artists and/or Mixed Medium Artists who use textile techniques in their work together. The first is a show titled Secrets to Dream On. In this exhibit Artists have been provided with a copy of an old circa 1920/30's photograph of four women and a best friends storey. They shared everything, but kept a few secrets for themselves. Artists are being challenged to write a secret storey for one of the ladies in the picture and then develop a piece of Art to illustrate the storey. This event will take place May/June, 2007 at another Alternative Venue in Toronto. For information and details visit <http://www.SecretsToDreamOn.cachelan.com>. Mary Kroetsch "Innocence of Freedom"

A second opportunity which is just in the negotiation stages at the moment is setting up a 3 day Gallery Area as part of the Fall 2007 Creative Sewing and Needlework Festival. This will hopefully be an opportunity to show and sell work as well as other services of the Artists that will participate. She also in the discussion stages with a commercial gallery representing her work, of letting her curate a group show for them. "I am trying to open doors." And on that note Mary invites Artists who want to step through those doors with her to make contact. Margaret Vant Erve "Long Winter"

Mary Kroetsch is a Textile/Mixed Media Artist who specializes in collage surface design storey telling. To learn more about her work and where to make contact please visit [http://textile\\_mixedmedia\\_artist.cachelan.com](http://textile_mixedmedia_artist.cachelan.com) or email her at [Talisman-Beadworks@sympatico.ca](mailto:Talisman-Beadworks@sympatico.ca). Image list: Tatjana Blinja Warriors Alison Hodson Brickworks. Sandra Smirle Are You With Me Heidi Pivnick Full Bloom Detail Christine Mockett Oil Pithoi Mary Kroetsch Innocence of Freedom Margaret Vant Erve Long Winter