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NEW EXHIBITION FEATURES OVER 100 EMBROIDERIES FROM 400 YEARS AGO TO NOW INCLUDING EMBROIDERY RECORDING PERSONAL MOMENTS THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

The exhibition traces the development of embroidery from a religious application to a domestic craft used to prepare young women for a life of oppressive household duties, and forward to a powerful contemporary artistic expression of social and political values.

Robert Reason, Director, The David Roche Foundation.

A new exhibition at The David Roche Foundation, ***Embroidery: Oppression to Expression***, features over 100 exquisite embroideries from four hundred years ago to now. The exhibition embraces contemporary textile practice in Australia and traditional European styles from Georgian England to William Morris and forward to the internationally renowned couture of Paolo Sebastian created in Adelaide. Due to the fragile nature of textiles many have never been exhibited before.



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The exhibition covers Arts & Crafts, Religion, Regency, Samplers, Animals, Fashion and Contemporary. It traces the development of embroidery from a religious application to a domestic craft used to prepare young women for a life of oppressive household duties, and forward to a powerful contemporary artistic expression of social and political values.

“Since the modern craft revival movement the outward expression of embroidery has changed dramatically and again recently with the notion of craftivism. Embroidery is enjoying something of a renaissance in Australian art ” said Robert Reason, Director of The David Roche Foundation.

David Roche AM (1930–2013) was fascinated with embroidery throughout his life, in his youth even making his own pieces. He collected many antique embroideries, of which twenty-one are on display in this exhibition, including his favourite canine subject.

The earliest item, an English embroidered book binding for a book of Psalms dates to 1603–1625, is on loan from the State Library of South Australia. While more recent ecclesiastical work has been lent from several Adelaide churches. The mainstay of embroidery, the instructional ‘sampler’ worked by young girls is well-represented and illustrates the humble to exquisite from the mid-18th century to Port Adelaide samplers of the 1860s and 70s. The Covid-19 pandemic also galvanised South Australian contemporary textile artist Sera Waters to create the #survivalistsamplers project as a way for people to record public and personal moments through embroidery to share on social media. Sera’s work is joined by four other participating artists, including Kay Lawrence.

Embroidery also plays a significant role in European fashion and rare eighteenth century waistcoats are displayed alongside other historical pieces, including an apron and stomacher. Australian couture by DISCOUNT UNIVERSE and Paolo Sebastian, the latter lending two gowns from their *East of the Sun and West of the Moon* Autumn/Winter Collection of 2019–2020, illustrate the varying roles embroidery plays in contemporary fashion.

It was the women’s movement that reimagined the possibilities of the domestic and feminine craft of embroidery and artists have continued to learn the skills and techniques to voice contemporary concerns. Today embroidery operates more widely, Paul Yore uses it within his arts practice to challenge religion, sex, politics and popular culture. While South Australian artist Makeda Duong uses embroidery as a vehicle to explore issues of mental health and politics, and Amy Joy Watson’s utopic Australian landscapes in metallic thread remind us of the ancient land we inhabit and conversely our impact on the planet.

A major survey of embroidery practices, *Embroidery: Oppression to Expression* is drawn extensively from South Australian public and private collections as well as examples collected by David Roche over his lifetime.



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Embroidery: Oppression to Expression until 25 September 2021

The David Roche Foundation House Museum

241 Melbourne Street, North Adelaide SA 5006

Open: Tuesday to Saturday 10AM-4PM

Exhibition Entry: \$12 adult. \$10 concession. Children under 12 free.

W: rochefoundation.com.au

Caption: Georgian period, Britain, *The Muses* (Goddesses of literature, science and the arts), 1780–1820, Britain, silk on painted linen, On loan from a private collection.

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