

# Criminal Quilt Takes 1st Prize

## **Textile artist Ruth Singer has won the Fine Art Quilt Masters competition at the 2016 Festival of Quilts**

Professional textile artist, Ruth Singer, aged 41 from Leicester, has won the prestigious Fine Art Quilt Masters prize at the Festival of Quilts with a piece inspired by Victorian women criminals. The Festival of Quilts is the largest quilt festival in Europe and the Fine Art Quilt Masters competition is judged by a panel of leading figures drawn from the art and quilting worlds and is sponsored by Vlieseline Freudenberg.



As well as critical acclaim, Ruth wins £5000 prize money which she intends to spend her winnings on research visits and residencies to develop more work using archives, museums and intriguing stories as inspiration. Ruth began her career working in museum education and curatorial roles before switching to textiles in 2005. Since then she has published three sewing books, exhibited widely around the UK and presented an acclaimed solo exhibition, *Narrative Threads*, at the National Centre for Craft and Design in 2015, of which this piece was part. *Narrative Threads* exhibition will be touring in 2017-18.

Ruth says: "My working practice is very intensive and time consuming, including research, planning and then meticulous hand stitching. Having this recognised and rewarded has given me a huge creative boost."

Criminal Quilts: Hanging is part of a series of work inspired by original archive photos from Staffordshire Records Office which Ruth came across during research for a commission for Shire Hall Gallery in 2012. A series of six small Criminal Quilts were commissioned and purchased by Shire Hall Gallery, Stafford, in 2012 and are now on display adjacent to the historic court room which inspired them and can be seen during gallery opening hours.

Research is fundamental to Ruth's creative process as a result of her first career in museums. She creates work for exhibitions and commissions exploring narratives, personal and historical stories including memories and emotions from her own personal life and family. Her work creates strong emotions and requires contemplation.

*"A very moving emotive exhibition."*

*"Fascinating execution of some clever conceptual ideas."*

*"An emotionally affecting exhibition. Brought tears to my eyes."*

Visitor comments from Ruth's Narrative Threads solo exhibition, 2015-16.

Ruth uses materials and techniques with a sense of history: "I am drawn to the discarded, damaged and fragile; things with stories. I work mainly with old cloth and favour traditional hand techniques of appliqué, patchwork, quilting and hand embroidery."

In this piece she has used naturally-dyed silk organza in layers with reverse appliqué and hand embroidery. Each leaf has two layers and the layers are suspended in front of one of the archive photographs from Staffordshire Records Office.

Criminal Quilts: Hanging will be on show at the Knitting & Stitching Show in London, Dublin and Harrogate in October - November 2016. For further information about Ruth, her publications and courses she runs, please see [ruthsinger.com](http://ruthsinger.com)

Original archive photograph courtesy of Staffordshire Records Office

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Photographer of the work Joanne Withers

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## **Notes for editors**

Festival of Quilts took place at NEC Birmingham 11-14th August 2016. It is organised by Upper Street Events and Twisted Thread. <http://www.thefestivalofquilts.co.uk>

Shire Hall Gallery, Market Square, Stafford, ST16 2LD. Tel: 01785 278345

## **Images**

High res images are available on Dropbox. Please phone Ruth with any queries regarding images

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