

Words About Women

Words about Women is an arts project run by artist Ruth Singer as part of her Criminal Quilts project. Criminal Quilts is an exhibition of textile artworks inspired by the stories of women held in Stafford Prison 1879-1916. Words about Women is running alongside the Criminal Quilts exhibition to engage with women and hear their stories.

The activity is based around the words or labels used to describe Victorian women in the prison system such as Habitual Criminal, Rogue or Inebriate. Ruth wants to talk to women and hear their own thoughts about the words or labels used to describe themselves and / or their Victorian counterparts.

Pieces contributed in early 2022 will be included into a growing piece on display in the final exhibition venue (Llantarnam Grange, Wales) Feb-April. Contributions received after this date will also be included and the piece photographed and shared widely including online.



The artwork will have two sides. One side made of darker fabrics has negative words. The other side made of lighter fabrics has positive words.

How to make:

Negative word panels should be stitched on a dark blue or dark grey background with white or off white text. Your own handwriting is fine. A yellow or white pencil crayon is useful for writing onto the fabric.

Positive words panels should be made from on white or off-white fabric background with dark blue or grey stitching. Write on the fabric in light pencil and stitch over the top of the words.

Fabrics :

I recommend using woven cotton fabrics as they are easier to stitch on. Old shirts are ideal. Each panel should be no more than 30cm long and 10cm high (this is a sheet of A4 folded lengthways). Keep the stitched text towards the centre so there is enough fabric clear to join your panel to another panel.

Embroidery :

You can use any type of stitch but I find back stitch is the easiest for creating stitched words. Appliqué is also welcome, as is machine stitch if you can do this.

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Where to send

Please send your contributions to Ruth Singer c/o Llantarnam Grange St David's Road,
Cwmbran, Torfaen, NP44 1PD

Deadlines

Please send contributions to arrive by 8th March to be included in the exhibition.
Deadline for all contributions 2nd April 2022 (will be added after the exhibition).

Words from Victorian prison documents

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Habitual Criminal | Vagrant |
| Habitual Drunkard | Pilfering tramp |
| Fallen woman | Offender |
| Inmate | Disorderly |
| Rogue | |
| Inebriate | |
| Illiterate | |
| Indecency | |
| Contempt of Court | |
| Felony | |
| Loitering | |
| Riotous prostitute | |
| Misdemeanours | |
| Larceny | |
| Soliciting | |
| Imperfect Education | |
| Insubordination | |