

Press Release September 2013

Laura Youngson Coll

The minutia of the natural world is central to the work of Laura Youngson Coll. The texture, palette and material qualities of leather and vellum are utilised in her work to convey the complexities of this world. Initially trained as a sculptor and installation artist, Laura has subsequently worked with bookbinders and leatherworkers for many years, learning traditional techniques and taking these skills back into her own sculptural work.

Learning these skills and techniques is continual process but I feel my material knowledge is now sufficient to gain some insight into the behaviour and possibilities of leather (specifically fine goat skin leathers) and vellum. I have decided with current work to take this as a starting point exploring ideas through the making process. The techniques of on-laying, paring and manipulating saturated leather are disengaged from their familiar function within book arts. After spending years becoming proficient in these techniques, the realisation of their potential in my sculptural work is an evolving process.



Untitled (Lichens) 2013
Vegetable-tanned goatskin leather, vellum

Laura's latest works explores the forms of lichens, a small but significant detail. Inherently curious, subtle but persistent, lichens function as the ultimate decorative surface belying a complex sensitivity to the environments they inhabit. Rendered in extravagantly crafted leather scraps, the artifice of these forms evokes a curiosity about their place within the world.



Left: Work in progress- paring leather



Right: Scalpel used to pare extremely thin sections of leather to transform into lichens. Glass provides a non-resist surface on which to pare. A bone folder used to work leather. Scraps of bookbinding leathers (usually fine vegetable-tanned goatskin leathers)

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Laura is a commissioned artist participating in the Make the Most exhibition, an initiative of Craftspace, Somerset Art Works and the National Trust currently showing at Barrington Court in Somerset. Partnered with a local glove maker Burfield & Co. (Gloves) Ltd, Laura has made two works exploring aspects of the house, gardens and the skills of local craftspeople within the glove making trade.

White Garden is based on the imaginings of a spectacular flower head inspired by the Gertrude Jekyll influenced White Garden at Barrington. A spherical form lends accord to this hybrid of component parts but each element is taken from different aspects its environment; plants from the garden and forms derived from the flora and fauna of Lyle's extraordinary collection of wooden panelling installed around the house. A component part is also included for a number of glove makers interviewed as part of the research and making process, paying tribute to their extraordinary knowledge of material and process and the quiet, repetitive making required to acquire these craft skills.



White Garden(installed at Barrington Court) 2013
Vellum, hair sheep leather (provided by Burfield's
Gloves Ltd)



Foliose (installed at Barrington Court, Dining Room) 2013
Hair sheep leather, hair sheep gloves courtesy of Burfield & Co.
Gloves Ltd

Foliose is derived from lichens forms found around Barrington Court house and grounds. These lichens inhabit a pair of handmade gloves, supplied by Burfield Gloves and the correct fit for Barrington Head Gardener Christine Brain. Although rendered impractical by the application of the lichens the gloves are attributed by fit to Christine in honour of her work and expertise in the garden. As indicator species lichens tell an alternative history of the house and its' environs. The work is designed to question assumptions about the aesthetic of leather, provoking a closer look, and articulate the diverse and patient making involved in working with such a material in both a contemporary and traditional context.

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Left: Foliose (detail) 2013
Hair sheep leather gloves made by Burfield & Co. Ltd.
hair sheep leather detailing
Right: White Garden (detail) 2013
Vellum, hair sheep leather



Contact details

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Further Information

Blog of the Make the Most project: www.laurayoungsoncoll.co.uk/barrington/
Decorative Leatherwork: www.theintricateproject.co.uk
Sculptural/Installation work: www.theminatureworldsshow.co.uk/laurayoungsoncoll/index.html

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Editor's Notes:

Make the Most exhibition at Barrington Court, Barrington Ilminster, Somerset TA19 0NQ.
01460 242614. Exhibition runs until 31st October