

Ideas for Mentoring with Contemporary Quilters London.

1. Journalling

According to my phone dictionary app, a Journal is:

A personal record of occurrences, experiences, and reflections kept on a regular basis; a diary

I have worked 4 journal pieces now. 2 of these were created over a period of time and reflected how I was feeling at the time of stitching. 1 was created from pieces of information regularly recorded on a beach which was then turned into a mixed media piece that expressed all that information once the set time frame had been completed. The 4th one was completely different and was a piece built up from actions taken during a set time frame and repeated 48 times. The journal aspect was that each hour's work was identical in format but showed differences in form reflecting the way I was working that day.

This demonstrates how versatile an artistic journaling work can be. It can be a direct and immediate response to regular pieces of information on a very personal level, or it can be work that expresses information gathered over a period of time but made after the fact, which shows any changes there might be.

The types of information can be just as varied, from how many items were in the washing up at breakfast every day, to how you are feeling about the news of the day. You might record birdsong every day and turn that later into a piece of work. You might map your daily walk or plot your step count, or both.

The key is to set an achievable set of criteria or 'rules' for yourself so that you know exactly what, for how long, or how many. Pick something that is repeatable: it is pointless recording something which only happens every couple of months, or the work will take forever to grow.

It could be as simple as taking a thread of a certain length, choosing the colour that day from a group of pre-chosen colours, and stitching whatever you feel like stitching that day. Or as complex as recording 5 minutes of sound in the same place at the same time every day, and realising that in order to turn that into something visual you might need to video the sound waves whilst recording, and doing that over a long period of time.

2. Collecting

There is something very seductive about collecting and arranging 'stuff'. The repetition of objects, but with minor differences, never fails to intrigue and prompt admiration, as long as there are multiples. 10 items can be just a group, whilst 100 is a collection.

Collecting can then prompt all sorts of responses in terms of making a piece of work that relates to, or is inspired by, that gathering of objects. There could be an illustrative or photographic response to the arrangement/s. The objects themselves might be used as part or all of the materials that go to make up the piece of work. Or they may simply prompt an idea which doesn't use the objects, or the arrangement, but responds to what the objects suggest to you.

This activity could be closely related to journaling as you might choose to collect something every day on a walk which really ticks both boxes and it would be hard to separate into

either project. The main difference here though is that with a collection, you could gather it all in one go.

Just to give an idea of how the 2 projects are different:

Photographs can be used in both projects. In a journal exercise, the photo would be taken at the same time every day, wherever you are. Or at the same spot every day regardless of the time. Or combine the two and take a photo at the same spot at the same time every day. I know that a photo taken on the beach every day at the same time looking out to sea could show significant differences.

In a collection, the photos would be of the same object or type of object and the timing would not feature as part of the exercise. Whenever you see a drain cover, you would photograph it. You might try to always include your feet with the drain cover as an indication of scale, or photograph trees from a similar distance for the same scale reason. You can therefore include an element of 'setting rules' for the collection as much as for the journaling, but the regularity is not the important element here.