

The Boat Builders

St Barbe Museum and Gallery | Jan 15 – Feb 26 2022

This new series of portraits by Emily Jo Gibbs documents the work of the Foreman and Apprentices at Berthon Boatyard in Lymington. Highlighting the Value of Making and the importance of skilled labour. A celebration of people who prefer a hands-on approach, whose knowledge and skill is gained through the doing, learnt through making.



"I'm interested in the idea that by taking the time to slowly describe someone in stitch, you convey your admiration. Celebrating people who make things by the investment of time in making the work, a quiet, thoughtful act of care and value".

Emily Jo Gibbs



Bradley Watson - 3rd year Apprentice Sprayer 2020

Hand stitched silk organza appliqué on linen

35cm x 44cm

SOLD

I met Brad on my second visit to Berton Boatyard. After spending sometime with the Shipwrights, I was taken to another enormous shed filled with a white vessel that was in for repairs, we climbed the scaffolding up to the deck. There was quite a hive of activity; Brad was on the top of the boat, right up in the rafters, clipped on and in his white PPE. He sat crossed legged up above me while we chatted about his route to becoming an apprentice and his future plans. The monotony of the task in hand, rubbing down this huge yacht was not lost on me.



Dave 'Curly' Bolwell – Foreman Shipwright 2020

Hand stitched silk organza appliqué on linen

29cm x 24cm

£1350

Curly came to Berthon as an Apprentice Joiner 35 years ago. He had liked Woodwork at school, he had a really inspiring teacher who also taught him to carve and offered him a job making Gypsy Caravans, but Curly had been determined to do an apprenticeship.

Joinery is still Curly's favourite aspect of the job, particularly furniture making. He explained that it was always a pleasure when a cabin required fitting out, because then he could use his cabinet making skills. We talked about how jobs like that were less common and that the workforce worked across many different disciplines.

In the picture I have made of Curly he is making repairs, carefully replacing rotten wood with new, looking along the line to check his work. I felt some part of his experience and his wealth of knowledge was captured in that moment.



Adam Weekes - 2nd year Apprentice Engineer

Hand stitched silk organza appliqué on linen

19cm x 20cm

£945

Having studied Marine Engineering at college Adam came to Berthon to continue his training. He was installing a console when I was there, he explained how he enjoyed working from scratch, how there had been little opportunity to do practical things at school but he had grown up playing with Meccano and his family had boats.



Jamie Ivey – 4rd year Apprentice Shipwright 2020

Hand stitched silk organza appliqué on linen

23cm x 26cm

£1300

When I met Jamie he was working with Sam a second year apprentice. They were working as a team on a project, reconstructing Ripple a 1925 Berthon Built Yacht. Jamie was on the inside, Sam on the outside doing what looked like riveting but is in fact called clinching, Jamie was teaching Sam what he had learnt previously, passing on his skill. Jamie really enjoys working with wood and hopes to stay on at Berthon after his apprenticeship finishes next year.



Sam Johnstone – 2rd year Apprentice Shipwright

Hand stitched silk organza appliqué on linen

19cm x 20cm

£945

Sam favourite aspect of the apprenticeship was the variety of jobs and to be working hand-on, he was really glad to be out of the classroom/college environment. On the day I was there Sam was working with Jamie a fourth year apprentice, they seemed a confident team getting on with the job in hand clinching Ripple.



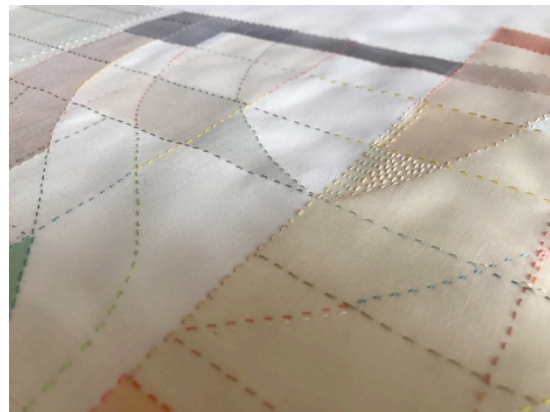
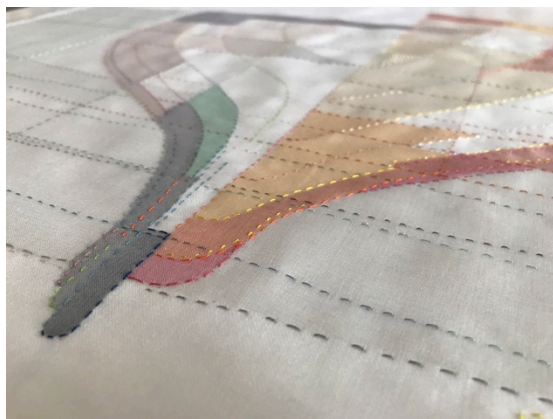
Steph Jung - 3rd year Apprentice Engineer

Hand stitched silk organza appliqué on linen

23cm x 27cm

£1300

Steph is an enthusiastic advocate for Berthon Apprenticeships. She had planned to go to university to study engineering but switched to do an apprenticeship at the last minute, enjoying earning alongside learning and being free of student debt. She has taken full advantage of all Berthon have to offer including taking up the invitation to travel on board an explorer yacht from Puerto Montt to Puerto Williams through the Patagonian fjords.



Lentune 2021

61cm x 55cm

Hand stitched silk organza appliqué on linen

£3080

Technical drawings speak to the really accurate way I like to work; I'm in full admiration of the draftmanship. This piece an exploration of colour and line was inspired by the beautiful plan of a 12 ton aux cutter named Lentune from the archive of St Barbe Museum.

The original 'lines plan' is from The Berthon Boat Company Ltd was drawn by Rodney Paul chief designer circa.1936



Many thanks Berthon Boatyard for giving Emily access and all the members of the Berthon team who gave up their time to talk to her. In particular Keith Longman and Dave Bowell. Many thanks also to Arts Council England for supporting this project.

Emily Jo Gibbs is a British Artist who over the last two decades has established an international reputation for her delicate hand stitched textiles. Examples of her work are in The V&A and The Crafts Council Collection.

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