





Circumstance has the effect of influencing and for artists these influences are at times embodied in their work. A case in point is the work of Nancy Tingey, a dual national who spends each year in Australia and England. Her lifestyle has raised a number of issues that she conceptualises such as the loss of identity from living in two countries as well as a sense of dislocation. Not only is the title of this exhibition a metaphor for combining the threads from two cultures, the actual process of manipulating wool fibre allows Tingey to invest in her work ideas relating to duality, migration and interconnection. Tingey believes that the characteristics of fibres reflect life experiences. In the same way that threads travel through textiles, she has travelled through places and like the felting process, made bonds along the way.

The work in *Two Ply* illustrates how Herdwick (English) and Merino (Australian) wool responds to hand-spinning, plying and machine needle felting. For Tingey, the process of felting the fibres of two countries is a metaphor for combining two ways of living into one, the soft fine Merino with the coarse resilient Herdwick. The work also explores comparisons between these fibres and an organic blend of a new fleece, Merinwick, which was developed through the cross breeding of Merino and Herdwick sheep in Cumbria UK, where Tingey has been based. The discovery of Merinwick wool suited Tingey's rationale perfectly and became incorporated into her work. The specific work in *Two Ply* that uses this fibre is *Cross*, representing changes that occur through crossing elements and the outcomes of bonding.

Tingey determined that there would be six distinct components in *Two Ply*, incorporating textiles with video, digital images and installation. The works are inspired by fence lines, tracking lines and a sense of movement between two places. Tingey alludes to the expressions *sitting on the fence* and *having a foot in both camps* when discussing her dual nationality and time spent in both countries. Her use of the fence as a metaphor is taken further in her work where lines are expressed as controlled vertical structures and wayward horizontal lines representing one's journey through

life. The initial inspiration for some of her works is the way that wool gets caught on fences, essentially the flocks' work in progress applied to a manufactured grid.

Working with textiles is an additive process for Tingey, who through combining chosen wools creates a canvas upon which she applies further actions such as embedding threads to represent imprints of memories and travel lines. What she maintains in her felted works is the fact that the fibres came from a living entity and through contrasting different fibres she creates surfaces that almost appear to be a network of capillaries. Where she employs hand spinning you get a strong impression of a literal meshing that is then used in a structural way with an awareness that encloses space and celebrates horizontal and vertical elements. However through these actions, her overall approach remains one of manipulating textiles to represent life-processes.

While Tingey aims to raise awareness of migrant issues through textile media she does so in a way that communicates rhythm through repeated elements and structure. Her monochromatic palette strengthens her ideas about connectedness and embedding where the dark is read against light and vice versa. The felting process is an appropriate technique as it allows her to feel her way around and predict a procedure but not an exact outcome. While naturally there is an initial reading of Tingey's work at a distance where the work as a whole can be taken in, a deeper connection can often be found by zooming in on sections of these works to absorb and connect with the detail.

Jas Hugonnet  
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Image credits: (front) *Cross*, 2004, Merinwick wool, hand felted. (back top to bottom) *(K)not Net* (details), 2004, Herdwick and Merino wool, hand spun and plied; *Fence Line*, 2004, Herdwick wool, machine stitched and needle felted. All Photos: courtesy of the artist.

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