

MATIÈRE

Chloe Forbes, Catherine Henley, Anna Krispel, Claudia Mazzotta, Jeanette Stok.

Curated by Dr Bree Di Mattina

Project Gallery, Queensland College of Art and Design,
Southbank.

Exhibition Dates: 11 – 22 August, 2026

Celebration Event: Thursday 20 August, 2026, 5pm – 7pm

Curator essay

MATIÈRE is an exploration of textiles as methodology, not simply material. Beginning with textiles and associated concepts and skills, each artist creates works which extend the traditional possibilities of their chosen materials and forms. The works in this exhibition prompt new thinking about textiles and fibre as artistic media and the possibilities of the associated skills such as sewing and crochet. Drawing inspiration from the pioneering work of Anni Albers and the Bauhaus, *MATIÈRE* foregrounds haptic skills and material explorations.

The Bauhaus school of art and design was established in Germany in 1919 before being forced to disband by the Nazi regime in 1933. Amongst those who taught at the Bauhaus were Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Marcel Breuer, László Moholy-Nagy, Josef Albers, Anni Albers and Gunta Stölzl, artists and teachers whose impact continues to permeate art, design and architecture today. From its inception, the Bauhaus encouraged new ways of thinking, experimentation with materials and forms, and embracing of the unexpected. The foundational course, which all students took when arriving at the school, was

dubbed the *matière*. French for materials, the *matière* encouraged students to question their preconceived notions of material properties and structures, focussing on making unexpected combinations and utilising materials and mobilising forms in unfamiliar ways. This was a course of discovery, a chance to wipe the mental slate clean and embrace a new world of creativity.

Student, and later teacher at the Bauhaus, Anni Albers became a specialist in textiles, revolutionising the department at the Bauhaus and later at Black Mountain College in the United States of America. Her work and writing on weaving and textiles remains one of the pillars of textile art and research today. In her now seminal text *On Weaving*, first published in 1965, Albers wrote extensively on the concept of *matière*. Albers used the term in a more literal sense, focussing on the materiality of textiles, yet the spirit of investigation and experimentation remained. Lamenting humanity's receding understanding of the tactile properties of materials, Albers espoused a relearning of material knowledge. More than just a physical engagement with textiles and materials, Albers wrote that *matière* involved a deeper understanding of the inherent properties and structures of materials.

Just as only a trained eye and a receptive mind are able to discover meaning in the language of colors, so it takes these and in addition an acute sensitivity to tactile articulation to discover meaning in that of *matière*. Thus the task today is to train this sensitivity in order to regain a faculty that once was so naturally ours. (Albers 45)

Albers believed that engagement with materials and understanding of *matière* enhances our lives, that tactile experiences were elemental and through experimentation and understanding, we could improve our experience and understanding of the world around us.

In this exhibition, the title *MATIÈRE* draws on the work of Albers and the Bauhaus, with the artists demonstrating a deep and evolving engagement with their chosen materials and techniques. Chloe Forbes, Catherine Henley, Anna Krispel, Claudia Mazzotta and Jeanette Stok each approach textiles and fibre as a methodology, not simply a material, extending their understanding of both the material and conceptual properties of the media. Using familiar textiles in unfamiliar ways, or unusual materials in conventional textile modes, the artists are united by their haptic skills and experimentation. Haptic skills are those which allow us to acquire, interpret and process information through touch

and repetitive actions. The artworks demonstrate the continuing and unfolding relevance of textiles and fibre in art, more than simply a mode for expression of subversion, artists are using the physical properties and skills associated with textiles and fibre to observe, record and question the world around them.

For Claudia Mazzotta textiles are a form of archive and expression. She uses antique textiles and thread to create abstract expressionist artworks, in which needle and thread replace paint and brushes. Domestic textiles, such as clothing or bedlinen, accompany us through our lives, acquiring a patina of use within their fibres. Mazzotta's reuse of these textiles extends their lifespan, layering her own stories upon them and repositioning them as works of art. Of Italian/Australian heritage, Mazzotta's acquisition of the textiles in Italy, onto which she stitches using skills taught to her by her mother, is both an exploration and preservation of her cultural heritage. Working into antique textiles Mazzotta creates a palimpsest of experience, adding her own to that of the previous owners and makers of the textile pieces. These works are instinctive and emotive, a record of and a response to her daily life, her stitches reflecting her experiences. Unlike traditional stitches which neatly join or

repair, Mazzotta's stitches are painterly, gestural and abstract. Her archive is physical, bodily, rather than orderly. Displayed on the wall the pieces extend the possibilities of both paint and stitch.

Catherine Henley's work *Pillage* (2026) is also a form of record, a crocheted, cartographic metaphor of environmental degradation. In this piece Henley imagines the fictional land of Pillage which has been exploited, worn and stretched beyond its limits – pillaged. Constructing her map of Pillage, Henley uses the properties of textiles and of crochet to articulate abuse of the environment. Like the land, fabrics develop worn spots through continued use, tiny balls of fibre known as 'pilling'. The word play in the title is compounded by material play, Henley crochets with fibres such as mohair (which are delicate and prone to wear), jute (rough and utilitarian) and plastic packaging (an environmental scourge), each material adding its properties to the finished piece. In construction of the map, Henley selected materials and stitches appropriate to each section. Pristine areas are made from fluid stitches in natural materials such as wool or silk, while polluted or damaged sections are formed from more rigid stitches in unnatural materials such as plastic bags and synthetic rope. Henley's

metaphorical exploration of Earth's looming environmental issues demonstrates a conceptual approach to crochet and materials, extending the usual expectations beyond the domestic.

Like Henley, Anna Krispel marries traditional techniques with nontraditional materials. The three brooches in the *Sashiko* series – *Prosperity*, *Good Fortune* and *Intent* (all 2026) – are made from copper, vitreous enamel, sterling silver and fine silver. These exquisite pieces resemble small swatches of richly stitched cloth. Sashiko is a traditional Japanese stitching technique used for reinforcing and repairing worn textiles. Simple stitches are combined into intricate geometric patterns, extending the life of the fabric while enhancing it aesthetically. The visible stitching valorises the act of repair demonstrating the worth of the textile and adding to the character of the piece. The brooches are made from enameled copper, the stitched patterns applied with fine silver, with each brooch featuring a unique stitch pattern which gives the piece its title. The titles reflect the high regard for Sashiko in Japanese culture and the significance of the stitching as cultural practice. Translating textile materials and skills into precious materials such as silver, Krispel interrogates traditional

notions of value and ideas of form, utilising the methodology of Sashiko.

Jeanette Stok also explores ideas of value in her work *Safe as Houses* (2026), her suburb of ten 'houses' spreading across the gallery floor. Formerly sites of comfort and protection, housing has increasingly become associated with investment and growth. Stok takes the recognisable, protective form of a roof, constructing it from fly screen, a material normally associated with keeping pests out of the house. The roofs are embellished with embroidery, emphasising the homely, yet the embroidery is stitched in fishing line and decorated with lures, materials of predator and prey. On several of the roofs the embroidery is unfinished and unravelling, symbolic of the unravelling of the 'great Australian dream' of homeownership. Like Krispel and Henley, Stok subverts the normal expectations of her materials, using an embroidery methodology with unconventional materials to highlight a contemporary issue.

Sites of comfort are also articulated in Chloe Forbes' installation work *Mindful Intent* (2026) which explores themes of mental health, memory and identity. Displayed centrally in the gallery, the oversized nature of the work is

symbolic of the gravity of these themes and the importance of actively maintaining our mental health. As an installation, *Mindful Intent* also offers visitors the opportunity to enter the work, taking a moment to surround themselves with the therapeutic effects of art and craft and the comfort of textiles, sheltered from the world. Textiles are often used symbolically in art to convey feelings of security, drawing on the warm feelings of a cozy jumper or a beloved soft toy. Art and craft are also therapeutic tools, with knitting, crochet and stitching frequently taught as forms of therapy, the state of flow that the brain enters during a repetitive task allowing for processing and recovery. While Forbes harnesses the therapeutic applications of textiles and art, mobilised on this scale, the work also subverts the associations between textile materials and skills and the domestic and dainty. While comforting, textiles and fibre are often regarded as soft, pliable and subsequently weak. However, threads are amongst the strongest materials in the world, especially when fibres are twisted together or warp and weft woven together. Forbes' installation, while 'soft', uses a textile methodology to convey mindfulness, strength and security.

Each of the artists in *MATIÈRE* demonstrate a deep understanding of their chosen materials and skills. Their use

of expected materials in unexpected ways or unorthodox materials in traditional textile modes demonstrates the evolving nature of contemporary textile and fibre. Textiles as methodology, not simply material, enables artists to examine the world around them in new, pliable ways.

Dr Bree Di Mattina

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Chloe Forbes

Chloe Forbes is a textile artist, jazz saxophonist and researcher from Brisbane/Meenjin. As well as working with yarn, Forbes holds a Bachelor of Music (Honours) from the Queensland Conservatorium. Their work combines sound, sculpture and personal narrative. Recently Forbes' work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions and their work *The Coat of Jazz Women* featured in the Moreton Bay Art Prize. In 2025 she had her first solo show *Jazz, Gender and the Queer Experience* at QCAD's Grey Street Gallery. Forbes' works explore the links between textiles and music, as well as the queer experience.

@chloeforbesmusic

Mindful Intent, 2026

Yarn, tent.

Catherine Henley

Catherine Henley is a contemporary jeweler and small object maker who invites slow looking and an appreciation of the overlooked with her intricately detailed studies of leaf litter, rubble and the discarded. Henley considers the essence of memory retained in the lithic, the metallurgic and the phytic, and how deep time can be represented in vastly different scales. Henley holds a Bachelor of Fine Art from Queensland College of Art and Design.

www.catherinhenley.com @catherine.henley.art

Pillage, 2026

Mohair, wool, silk, linen, cotton, garden twine, jute, synthetic marine rope, plastic produce bags, plastic packaging.

Anna Krispel

Anna Krispel is an artist and jeweler. She holds an honours degree in Fashion and Textile Design from Brighton University in the United Kingdom and a Master of Visual Arts from Queensland College of Art and Design. She has been featured in group exhibitions at The Side Gallery, Impress Gallery, Mossenson Gallery (Perth) and Manly Art Gallery and Museum (Sydney) as a finalist in the Environmental Art and Design Prize. Krispel's works marry small sculpture, jewelry and stitching practices, creating wearable pieces of art.

www.annakrispel.com @annakrispel

Sashiko (Prosperity, Good Fortune, Intent), 2026

Copper, vitreous enamel, sterling silver, fine silver.

Claudia Mazzotta

Claudia Mazzotta's multidisciplinary practice is anchored by an experimental textile process. Her work consists of hand stitching on old fabrics, often several centuries old. These textiles have been collected from various origins. With each stitch made meticulously by hand, Mazzotta engraves stories of life onto textiles, rejecting the structured tradition of embroidery. She considers her needle and thread to be drawing tools. Mazzotta holds a Master of Visual Arts from the Queensland College of Art and Design. She exhibits regularly, holding solo shows in 2025 at Station Street Co Op Gallery (NSW) and in 2024 at Side Gallery and has been a finalist in the Ravenswood Australian Women's Art Prize and the International Art Textile Biennale.

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Untitled , 2026

Antique cotton textiles, cotton thread.

Jeanette Stok

Jeanette Stok is an Australian artist and educator who holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Sculpture) from Queensland College of Art and Design. Over the last decade Stok has been modifying traditional embroidery techniques for use with alternative materials, such as galvanised wire mesh and black plastic gutter guard. These non-textile materials, which are more commonly associated with the exterior than the domestic, allow her to create unusual patterns that are impossible with a needle and thread. They also encourage a reflection of the way identity and perspective is shaped through culture, adaptation and repetitive actions. Her work has featured in the Australian Wearable Art Festival and Swell Sculpture Festival.

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Safe as Houses, 2026

Aluminium fly screen, fishing line, aluminium wire, swivels.