



For her exhibition at the Women's Library, Dupré has brought together a series of temporary

installations that explore the art of making in the everyday and celebrate women's creativity.

autres mers (other seas) exhibition is a unique opportunity to view installations developed by the artist in her London studio alongside installations created in the context of her collaborative-participatory projects. For Dupré these two approaches to creativity are interconnected and equally instrumental in the development of her practice.

Crossing over the disciplines of sculpture, craft and design, Dupré appropriates and re-contextualises knitting and stitching activities – traditionally associated with domesticity and women – to create hybrid objects and ephemeral installations. These installations are to be considered as socially engaged as well as aesthetic sculptural spaces.

Dupré's use of textiles is strategic, for her intention is to create work that taps into our shared experiences as well as our individual sense of self. Textiles are therefore chosen for their cultural specificity as well as universality and transnational nature. The artist's exploration and experimentation with decorative and repetitive patterns, arise from the notion of 'crafting of space' a term used by Sandra Alfody and Janice Helland in their discussion of architectural ornament (*Craft, Space and Interior Design 1855–2005*, 2008). Crafts are used as a means to transform space, not just to decorate it. The transformative role of crafts and ornament, in our understanding and experiencing of space, has been instrumental in the development of Dupré's textile-based installations. This has brought her to work with all over floral and geometric patterns and traditional crafts made by a wide range of individuals, communities and cultures, including Balkan and Ottoman traditional designs.

In her installations, the artist re-uses a wide range of materials and disposable objects including bottle tops, fruit nets, and carrier bags made from woven polypropylene. Carrier bags are chosen for their association with the transnational condition of contemporary life. The bags, with their distinct printed patterns and weaves, are used for daily shopping as well as for carrying goods and belongings across continents. The exhibition title: *autres mers* (phonetically close to the French: 'outres-mers' (French 'départements d'outres-mers' or 'DOM') and translated as 'other seas' evokes the migratory movements of people, cultures and goods that are the transcultural nature of the exhibition, and the artist.



Pattern, Feminism & Hope



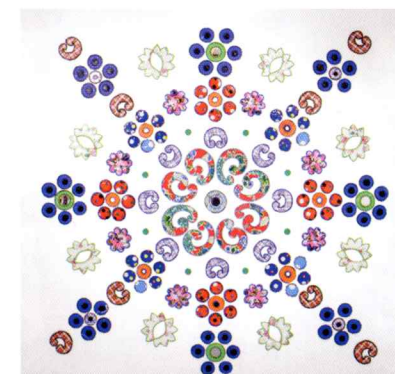
In 1892, the American author Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*, a short story that questioned women's expected occupations as mother and homemaker. Gilman's character goes mad. Or perhaps she is the only one to see the madness of society and is on the fast track to sanity. It can be a bit hard to tell as her one companion during her forced sabbatical from 'normal' life is the wallpaper that surrounds her. Like Gilman, Françoise Dupré chooses familiar materials – brightly coloured carrier bags, bottle tops, curtain wires and tights – to construct a world of pattern that makes inside and outside difficult to differentiate. And like Gilman, Dupré asks pattern to say a lot.

Dupré is a cultural hybrid, mixing visual languages to create new combinations, and leading workshops that allow others to do the same. "As a French-born artist, based in London, I am more comfortable working in socially, and culturally 'off-centred' places and with so-called 'marginalised' communities," she explains. "These are contexts where I feel I do not have to deal with my own sense of un-belonging because everyone is other." Her strategy refuses – visually and symbolically – to rest. Instead she looks for hope where others have given up and refuses to conform to popular thinking that feminism is tired and pattern out of fashion.

In her new introduction to the second edition of *The Subversive Stitch*, penned last year, the late Rozsika Parker observed, "Today there is no longer a thriving political movement for women. I wrote the book under the impetus of Second Wave Feminism [...] Apparently we 'dumped' women's domestic art skills." Parker challenges this latter assertion and finds new versions of the feminist ideology thriving. Dupré, in her unashamedly feminist (in the most positive sense of the term) choice of audience and materials, is part of this renewed energy. She chooses techniques, such as spool knitting and appliqué for their visual impact and technical accessibility. Construction of her work is both individual and community-centred, introduced through workshops in locations as disparate as Milton Keynes, England and Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Dupré's workshop participants are far removed from the Starbucks Knitting Club of stressed-professionals with ample leisure time. Instead she makes, and inspires others to make, bold patterns that bravely tackle the complexity of our identities today. As Gilman likely knew all along, the pattern was never a trap. It may contain hidden meanings, but here it celebrates survival, recovery and hope.

Dr Jessica Hemmings
Edinburgh College of Art
2011



Ouvrage (uvra:ž)



autres mers (other seas) exhibition includes the collaborative-participatory project OUVRAGE [uvra:ž], which was realised during the artist's residency at the French Cultural Centre in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina (July-August 2009). Through a series of workshops, the artist with 25 participants created a site-specific installation for the Čejvan Čehaja Hamam, Mostar's Ottoman Bath. OUVRAGE was made with the Mostar-based women's association *Novi Pogled*, breast cancer survivors and campaigners; other participants were friends of the French Cultural Centre; art students and young artists from Mostar, Birmingham (England) and Cluj-Napoca (Romania). OUVRAGE [uvra:ž] was funded by Birmingham City University, French Institute in Bosnia and Herzegovina, University of Art and Design Cluj-Napoca and sponsored by PONY.

OUVRAGE [uvra:ž] contributes to the artist's ongoing practice-led research project: *here and there*. The aim of *here and there* is to research and develop a practice of spatial intervention within the context of an ethical artist-led collaborative-participatory model of art in the public sphere.

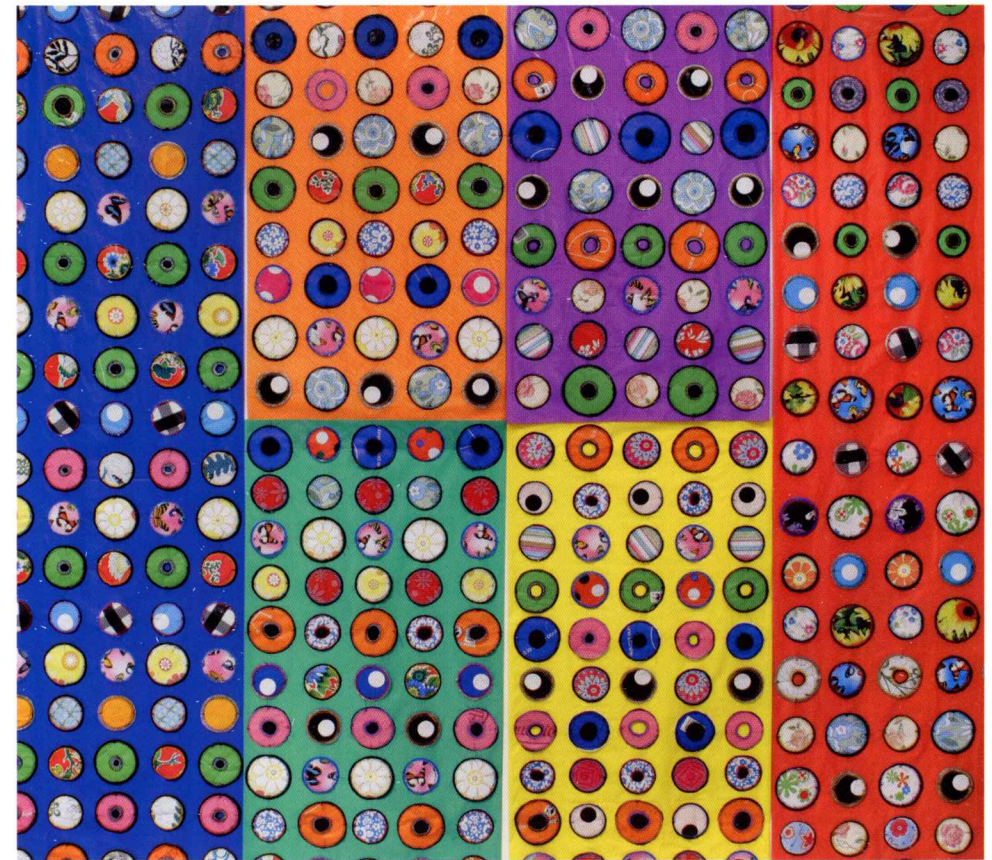
Dupré uses French (spool) knitting for its reference to domesticity and childhood, as well as for its sculptural qualities. French knitting is simple, extremely versatile and allows participants to use their own designs and stitching. The aim of Dupré's projects is not primarily therapeutic and it is not about making work about participants' memories and life experiences, although these are aspects of the process. Beside the intersubjective engagement, it is the emphasis on the creation of an artwork that is important to the *here and there* projects. For the artist, a meaningful and ethical collaborative-participatory practice is one that provides a context for participants to become, through the creation of an artwork, active social subjects.



Farshaxanaka Dumarka (women artists)



To coincide with *autres mers* exhibition, Françoise Dupré has been commissioned to develop and realise a collaborative-participatory project with the London-based Somali women's group Back to Basics. The project will take place in June and July and its outcome will be shown at the Women's Library as part of the *autres mers* exhibition. This is a unique opportunity for Dupré, and Rakhia Ismail, Surface Patten Designer and founder of Back to Basics, to work again together. Their previous project *fujaan* (2005) was commissioned by Crafts Council for its international touring exhibition *Knit 2 Together: Concepts in Knitting* (2005-06).



Françoise Dupré Biography

Born in France and based in London, Françoise Dupré is an artist and a part-time senior lecturer in Fine Art at Birmingham City University, School of Art where she contributes to BCU Centre for Fine Art Research through her practice-led research project *here and there* (an ethical collaborative-participatory model of art in the public sphere). Dupré trained in London at Camberwell College of Art, Chelsea School of Art and Design and City University.

Françoise Dupré exhibits widely in the UK and abroad. Current and recent exhibitions include: *Spirals* installation, Lion Brand Yarn Studio (New York, May-July 2011); *Mailles*, group exhibition, Maison du Danemark (Paris, 2011); *Radical Lace and Subversive Knitting*, group exhibition, Museum of Arts and Design (New York and touring, 2007-2008); *joie de faire (the making of stuff)*, solo exhibition, Menier Gallery (London, 2007); *Knit 2 Together: Concepts in Knitting*, Crafts Council (London and touring, 2005-2006).

Recent collaborative-participatory projects include: *OUVRAGE* [uvra:ž], *here and there* residency project, French Cultural Centre, Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2009); *exotic mk*, commissioned project, Milton Keynes Gallery's Offsite Education Programme (UK, 2009); *Project B: avlija and sebilj*, Birmingham Architecture Week and New Generation Arts (UK, 2007 and 2008); *joie de faire (the making of stuff)*, residency project, John Radcliffe Hospital, Alexandra Reinhardt Memorial Award (Oxford, UK, 2006); *Fujaan* commissioned project, Crafts Council (London, 2005); *de fil en aiguille... snath nasc, here and there* residency project, Irish Museum of Modern Art (Dublin, 2003-2004).

For more information about the artist visit: www.axisweb.org

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autre mers (other seas)

Crafting the everyday, here and there

Installations by Françoise Dupré

The Women's Library

26 May – 30 September 2011