

Heallreaf 3

The third biennial exhibition of contemporary tapestries from around the world

So many tapestry artists are drawn to the landscape as their source of inspiration. The flow of water runs through many of the works. Blue-greens, inky indigos and turquoises of waves, rivers, pools and splashes appear and reappear.

Frances Crowe's 'Turmoil' depicts a figure floundering, drowning and swimming in a maelstrom of colours and directions: a great expression of anguish and fear.

There's a hint of early Hockney in Elizabeth Chester's 'Rain on Coniston'. With its delicately observed ripples and slashing overlaid diagonal stitching she captures the driving Cumbrian rain.

Elizabeth Radcliffe's 'Wave in Dalmore Bay' featured in the catalogue was not on show for some reason, but she shows outstanding control and beauty in this complex and detailed weaving, which I hope will be on display at the London show. [Margaret Jones says that she hopes that Elizabeth Radcliffe's work will be on show in London; due to unforeseen circumstances she was not able to get it to them for Nottingham.]

A darker kind of liquid seeps through Christine Sawyer's 'Split'. Pollution and erosion; beauty in decay. Christine mixes soft wools with hard linens and cottons (I think!) emphasising the contrast of beauty and destruction. Chemistry was never my forte, so the symbols were lost on me (C_nH_{2n+2}). This is a wild yet controlled tapestry. The perfect lettering contrasting with the destruction unfolding, like an advertising billboard warning and obscuring at the same time.

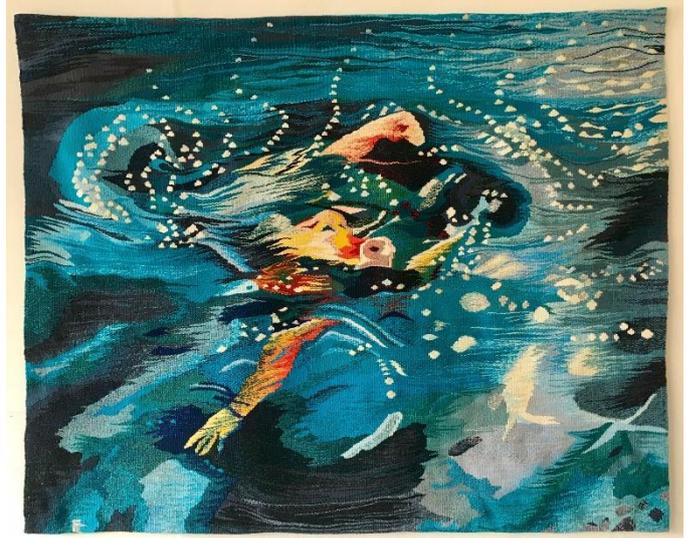
Ellen Ramsay's well-deserved winning piece 'Satori' captures time and memories in the dark waters of a lotus pool flanked on either side with golden pink blossoms. Her outstanding tapestry shows great skill and control within an exciting bold design.

I loved Lin Squires piece 'Do You See the Horse?'. Here is a dynamic weaving using eccentric weave techniques to capture vitality and movement. Though executed in pinks, reds and greys it reminded me of Franz Marc's Blue Horses. This tapestry would work brilliantly as part of a giant mural.

Margaret Jones, the organizer of this superb show is also a contributor. In 'The Fallen' (a diptych) she shows a masterful use of colour and contrast.

Heallreaf 3 is full of variety and excitement. If you're a weaver, allow yourself plenty of time to study the works on display. The exhibition showcases excellence in execution and technique.

The exhibition includes 40 pieces of tapestry from artists across the world including the US, New Zealand, Israel and Europe. For some of these artists it is the first time they have exhibited in the UK. For a full list of artists go to espaciogallery



Frances Crowe 'Turmoil' 150x125cm, cotton warp and wool weft. Photo © Shmueli Bell

Purples, greens and salmon pinks on a dark green and maroon background on one side, icy winter hues on the other: a very striking tapestry.

In 'Call Me' Christine Paine's mobile phone hovers in a deep purple/blue neon abstract space. The phone entices us in with its subtle viscose sparkle and shadowy figure in the distance, brilliantly capturing the alienation, distance and separation of modern-day communication.

I cannot begin to do justice to all the great work on display, and this is just a taster of what there is to see.

I have two requests for the London show. Please could the materials used, and the size of the finished work be noted? And could Louise Martin's piece "1:2" be mounted on a black background so it is not totally lost on the white gallery walls?

Review by Ruth Bell whose tapestry 'Unifying Force: the Power of Giving' can also be seen at the Heallreaf show. ruthbell55@gmail.com

Surface Gallery, NG1 1DL. 7 – 21 September 2019
Espacio Gallery, E2 7DG. 15 – 26 October 2019