

PAM GLEW ARTISTS STATEMENT

In my work I explore how identity is constructed by our place of birth, the countries in which we live and our heritage. This is usually represented by flags or vintage textiles, quilts, deconstructed denim and upholstery fabric.

My practice has involved painting on cloth since 2005. Initially I painted on flags with heat guns, ink and dye. And through experimentation I have developed a painting technique using bleach and dye, which is unique to my practice.

I take a vintage cloth, flag or quilt and dye the entire textile black. I then paint the light areas with bleach, slowly revealing the cloth colour underneath the black dye. Often the textiles original colours are strong enough to resist the bleaching process, removing the black dye reveals the vintage pattern and original fabric colour beneath. Each painting is painted around 10 times, after each bleaching process the fabric is washed, dried and pressed and in the final stages all the chemical bleach is removed from the fabric. Often the fabric needs re-darning, sewing, or colouring, to complete the reworked textile. The aim is to create a portrait, which emerges from the cloth.

Antique quilts and flags have become a favourite medium to work with, as the history of the cloth gives an rich and precious surface to paint on. The quilts are antique but the graphic patterns seem to my eyes unexpectedly modern. The quilts are often made by a grandmother which should be a family heirlooms, but somehow becomes available in the antique market and I then give it a new lease of life. These quilts are mended in the studio, or deconstructed to create wall panels suitable for the bleach and dye process. The holes and rips that form in the painting process are darned which adds to the texture and history.

I am interested in the culture of heritage, a sense of belonging, or estrangement from our countries. Also, a sense of nostalgia for certain countries is a repeated theme in my work.

The flag series was developed around the time of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, I was reacting to the Bush administration as I saw the fear mongering and brainwashing techniques being used by media and government propaganda. I painted women from horror films looking 'beautiful and scared' as creating this numb state seemed to be a growing technique in both Britain and America. Many of the flags have been made reacting to war including *Afghan Girl* and *Palestine*.

My current series is looking at the world in a much smaller scale. I am exploring the theme of the 'hotel room' as a place where society works together; functionally or dysfunctionally. The many roles of the hotel staff, the inhabitants of the hotel room are placed in roles which pigeon hole and divide, but in the work I aim to re-evaluate and question these roles.

Pam Glew, August 2014