

Liverpool Memories

by Debbie Eyre

Back in September, I travelled north for a weekend of sketching, socialising, and catching up with Urban Sketchers from around the UK. Urban Sketchers are usually found sketching on the streets of our hometowns (in my case, that's Birmingham) but at least once a year we meet up in cities around the country for 'sketchcrawls' and evening events. It's always a lot of fun. Earlier in the year I'd been to Newcastle. This time it was Liverpool.

You have to find your own accommodation. I'd booked into a hotel in Chapel Street, near the cruise terminal, and as I checked in my bags and enjoyed a very welcome pot of tea in the hotel lounge, I noticed that the walls were decorated with giant thread bobbins and what looked like museum artefacts from old cotton mills. Not what you'd expect at all.

There were more surprises to be found upstairs. Outside the lifts on each floor were displays of textile-themed books, both fiction and non-fiction, all available for guests to borrow and all in mint condition. I was in the hotel for reasons that had nothing to do with textiles but that didn't stop me from greedily helping myself to the biggest and most attractive volume, which turned out to be Sara Impey's *Text in Textile Art*.

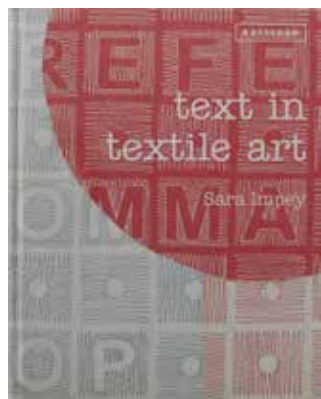
Back in the hotel room, flicking eagerly through Sara's book, I became really engrossed. It was beautifully produced and there was a massive range of inspiration from Sara and other textile artists, together with instructions on how to create your own projects. I knew I had found something that would be incredibly useful.

Below: Group picture on the steps of Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral



Photo credit: Martin O'Driscoll

Below: The book that inspired Debbie



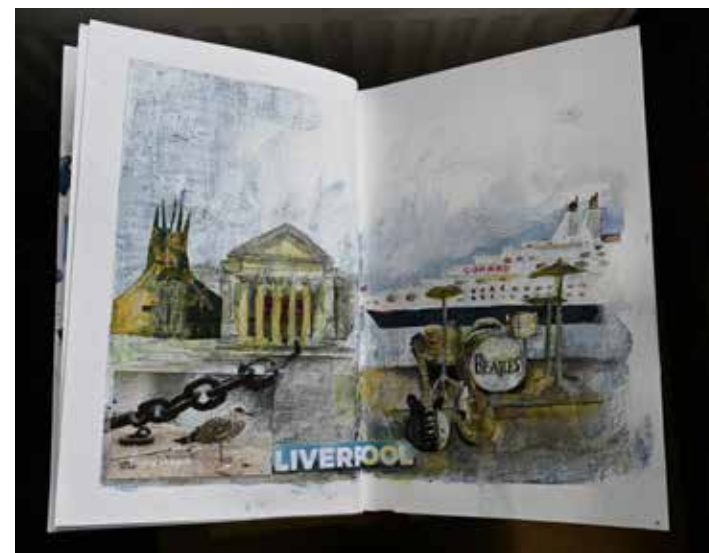
But I was in Liverpool to sketch and, emerging from the hotel, that is what I did. I found the other sketchers and we drew the cathedrals, the Albert Dock, the Liver Building, everything in Hope Street and all the other tourist attractions we could find. There were museums and galleries to cater for all our interests: maritime, art and, the most important of all, the Beatles. The Queen Mary 2 was making an overnight call in the port that weekend after her 400th Atlantic crossing, so we sketched her as well.

The weekend was a success. Being with like-minded people is always a pleasure and sketching in a group is such an absorbing and sociable activity. It's also really inclusive. No matter your level (or lack) of expertise, you can join in with just a sketchbook and a pencil. Everyone is always positive and encouraging.

But...sketching is not my only passion. I also love textiles. I'm always trying to combine the drawing and the fabric. Could I turn my Liverpool sketchbook pages into something stitched?

Earlier in the year, I had begun to experiment and attempt to use the home printer for transferring drawings on to fabric. There was a certain amount of trial and error and coaxing and pleading with the printer but when it stopped chewing the fabric, I made my first journal quilt and then a second, based on a weekend's set of sketches of Coventry. I kept going, working out the best way to transform pictures into quilts, with the monthly journal quilt challenge from Contemporary Quilt as my motivation.

So, discovering Sara's book in that Liverpool hotel was exciting because it was fresh inspiration for the design of those monthly mini-quilts. I had reluctantly returned the book to the display shelf in the hotel but once I got home, I got busy with the new quilt.



Right: A page from Debbie's sketchbook

Method

As I've said, there's always an element of experimentation and each month's journal quilt is different. The fabrics and the preparation methods change, and there is always some variation in the way to combine the images. The steps shown here are the process I used for this specific quilt; next time the technique may be different, but this is what worked for me on this occasion:

Step 1

Cut fabric to a size that fits your printer. (This is Fabric A.)

I used a digital pre-coat on A4 size calico that I painted on and left to dry. The pre-coat enables the ink to stay on the surface of the fabric which helps to define the image and keep the colours vivid. An alternative method would be to use commercially prepared inkjet printing fabric.

Step 2

On a second piece of fabric (Fabric B) draw a grid with removable marker and ruler. This will be the background fabric.



Above: Close up 1



Close up 2

Step 3

Prepare paper letters for the chosen text. These will be stencils/masks to quilt around. Attach them temporarily to spaces in the grid on Fabric B.

I used A4 sticker paper and a cutting machine for this stage, but you could use a computer to print out letters and then cut out with scissors.

Step 4

Attach fabric A to a carrier support (such as freezer paper) before inserting it into the printer. Print your chosen image, making sure the image measurements match your fabric.

I chose a double page from my sketchbook which I printed twice.

Step 5

Cut up the printed image into squares and stitch on to the remaining squares on the grid. I added some coloured pencil to the background calico to connect the pictures.

Step 6

Quilt carefully around the paper letters using free machine embroidery. Once the quilting is finished, remove the paper letters.

Step 7

Admire your completed mini quilt!



Above: Process step 3

Some thoughts for the future...

Before returning home that weekend, I learned that the hotel was so full of textile references because it wanted to connect to the historical cotton trading of the local area and the textile heritage of the region.

The history of cotton in the UK is an interesting topic, with many strands to explore. I became much more aware of the impact of cotton while I was in the city and as stitchers, quilters and purchasers of fabric, maybe we need to sometimes stop and think about what happened in the past and what happens now in the world to provide our textiles.

I certainly have a lot more to learn; there may be many more Liverpool trips on the horizon.

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Right: The finished quilt