



School: Bath School of Art

Researcher: Mandy Bonnell

Project Title: *Fragile Stories*

UOA: 32: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory

300-Word Statement

Fragile Stories explores the complexity of mark making on an intimate scale, using typographic punctuation and careful precision to create skeletal structures inspired by the natural world and textile samples. It responds to nature as lines, shapes and rhythms of contemplative repetition, and to stitching as text and language.

The research investigates the connections between drawing and stitching, combining a variety of traditional craft techniques with contemporary drawing and printmaking processes. It asks, what is the relationship between drawing and stitching, and how might these techniques inform one another?

As well as responding to the natural world, *Fragile Stories* draws on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century textile samples of embroidery and lace. The works in the Collection are created using typographic punctuation marks transferred into different pattern formations to form a narrative. The time it takes to produce these sequences unites the pursuit of hand-stitched needlepoint while utilising a repeated mark within a non-repeated pattern.

Responding to self-taught eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women artists and naturalists, *Fragile Stories* acknowledges forgotten artists, whose images are lasting examples of plants and insects now extinct, and provides insight into the attitudes and practices of women at the time. One objective of the research has been to establish an on-going visual and tactile dialogue with the past, and interpret this through contemporary drawing and printmaking methods.

Bound up with the project's dialogue with the past is a line of enquiry that considers the conservation of textiles and paper in sample books, and the role of binding (as a conduit and container) in preserving textiles, drawings, and botanical specimens. Bonnell's methodology involves the dematerialisation of drawings by producing a series of unique book works.

This multi-component output consists of a number of prints and artist's books that were exhibited internationally between 2014 and 2020.