

**Delicate Matters
Hillu Liebelt
Touring Exhibition**

Black Swan Arts,
Frome, Somerset
9 May – 13 June 2009

Black Swan Arts in the old textile market town of Frome was the third and last venue for this travelling exhibition of new work by Hillu Liebelt. A mixture of woven tapestries and textile sculptures, the exhibition was first shown at Hishio, Centre for Cultural Exchange in Katsuyama, Japan in 2008 and subsequently at the Platform Gallery in Clitheroe, Lancashire earlier this year.

A former pub now converted to house a shop, café and workshops with a lovely, bright gallery upstairs, Black Swan Arts was a perfect setting for Hillu's work. I was immediately drawn to the woven pieces. Strong, abstract and very colourful, they were extremely finely woven in rayon, silk and cotton, with some mounted on brushed aluminium. In Hillu's own words: 'I am excited by all the options of combining metallic and textile materials, the contrast between the hard and the soft, the rigid and the pliable'. This excitement shows in her work, as does her love of colour. She works equally well with very bright primaries or gentle greys and whites.

On entering the room you immediately saw a vibrant floor-standing piece, *Out Of The Blue*.

A background of strict geometrical patterns in strong brilliant shades of blue, with a bright, golden circle woven in a freer, smaller pattern glowing from it. I loved the series of eight tiny, very gentle *Winter Sun* pieces in shades of yellow and grey. All the woven pieces showed huge skill in the weaving and attention to detail in the mounting and presentation.

The minimalist textile sculptures were obviously inspired by Japanese art following Hillu's visit to Japan in 2006.

The series of red silk cocoons on stainless steel wires with wonderfully humorous titles like *I Am More Tolerant Than You* or *Bending Over Backwards* all referred to relationships, and in a subtle way showed exactly what they were about.

The publicity made much of the central major work entitled *Dance* featuring a mass of 'nodding' heads made from silk cocoons. These were meant to move gently as you walked past, but it was difficult to detect much in the way of movement. They did look beautiful though and the criss-cross shadows they cast more than made up for the lack of movement.

Other wall-hung pieces consisting of white polyester with numerous cuts were slightly lost due to inadequate lighting.

Altogether it was a beautiful exhibition showing this versatile artist's skilful manipulation of her chosen materials.

Kirsten Glasbrook

Below:
Bending Over Backwards,
silk cocoons on wire.
Hillu Liebelt 2008



Blue On White, tapestry woven
in rayon, silk and cotton
Hillu Liebelt 2008

Installation Dance at Black
Swan Arts, Frome, Somerset
Hillu Liebelt 2008

