

# THE ART OF ANNEMIEKE MEIN

25 February 2026 to 25 May 2026  
Gippsland Art Gallery

## DIVING BLUE-BILLED DUCK 1992

Textile wall sculpture.  
145 x 103 x 6(relief) cm.

Collection Gippsland Art Gallery. Donated through the Australian Government Cultural Gifts Program by the Bate family in memory of John & Liz Bate, 2020.

A rare and protected species, the diving blue-billed duck pursues its prey underwater with remarkable speed and grace. This work portrays only a split second in time. The duck is in fast pursuit of a small fish (a carp). The time taken from spotting a fish to surfacing with the fish in its bill all seems to happen in the blink of an eye. I've watched these beautiful shy ducks in action at Lake Guthridge, at the Sale Common, and at Dowd's Morass. Its diving propulsion is entirely done by its legs and feet.

Observing and understanding water movement was also a major part of the work, especially how water layers move upward and downward, displaced with the pressure and speed of impact in a duck-dive and with the swishing of the duck's webbed feet. I wanted to display the many abstract patterns created, the way the light catches on air bubbles, the way different layers and depths of water swirl and twist and seem lighter or darker or denser, and the way the colours are refracted in some water areas. Because I couldn't physically get down in the water with the duck and see all first-hand, I experimented with dropping heavy stones coated with food dye into a fish tank for the underwater effects. The surface splash was easier and effectively observed by dropping rocks into a pool of water. The work shows the delicate balance between the abstract shapes in colour and texture, within a realistic portrayal.

## DIVING BLUE-BILLED DUCK DESIGN PLAN 1992

Pencil on glass paper.  
92 x 43 cm.

Collection Gippsland Art Gallery. Donated by the artist.

## COLOUR PLAN 1992

Pastel on paper.  
96 x 50 cm.

Collection Gippsland Art Gallery. Donated by the artist.

These two plans are developing and working sketches for Diving Blue-billed Duck.

The idea was to have most of the duck merge in with the 'froth and bubble' of the watery dive. Only the head of the duck was to be finely detailed. The rest of the duck is a wash of merging tones of brown, tan and blue to give the illusion of speed and movement through the water.

A great deal of artistic licence was used in this work. The duck was elongated and stretched out to enhance the diving action. Its neck is stretched to give greater emphasis to the fish chase. The tail and wing feathers are lengthened and drawn in abstract streaks to accent speeding through water.

## SEA GAR SCHOOL 1993

86 x 94 cm.

Collection Gippsland Art Gallery. Purchased with the assistance of the Rotary Club of Sale, 1993.

Appliqué, machine embroidery, fabric paints, silk organza, synthetic fluorescent and metallic fibres, lurex, glitter threads, iron-on interfacing, machine threads (silk, cotton, polyester, rayon) on cotton canvas.

Sea Gar School and Sea Gar were made together and share all the same fabrics, threads, and paints.

Sea Gar School depicts a school of garfish rising from the depths of the ocean to feed in the warm surface waters.

There is protection in numbers as they dart through the water side-by-side.

The fish were painted on silk organza with underlays of lustre paints and metallic fibres to give a fish-like glitter to the fish scales.

## FANTAIL RHAPSODY 1987

High-relief sculpture with relief sections extending beyond the frame.

165 x 170 x 12(relief) cm

Collection Gippsland Art Gallery. Donated by Joy and Ray Wootton through the Gippsland Art Gallery Foundation, 2024

Inspiration for the design of Fantail Rhapsody was stimulated by my first visit to the commissioners' house overlooking Lake Glenmaggie in August 1986. The house itself is in a spectacular setting with peaceful panoramic views of water, hills, and native bush. Only the birds broke the silence. I have tried to capture these initial impressions in the work.

I also tried to capture the sense of bird noise, particularly through the interaction of four siblings all demanding food at once. The parent bird (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*) is portrayed gently and patiently doing the best it can under the circumstances.

Four fledgling fantails were chosen because the commissioners have four (now adult) offspring, and it tickled my fancy that the work might remind them of their labours when the family was young. Fantails were abundant at Lake Glenmaggie in the 1980s.

The flora portrayed is grey box (*Eucalyptus macrocarpa* hybrid). The leaves are shown in various stages of development ranging from bright new shoots to dark older

leaves. What they have in common is abundant gall growths from wasp infestation as well as many eaten-out holes where insects had previously dined. The dark gaberdine fabric leaves were my husband Phillip's old 1950s English-made raincoat. He generously surrendered it to me for the sake of art!

#### LEAPING LACEWINGS 2024

High-relief textile wall panel.

71 x 73 x 8 cm (includes the extension beyond the bottom frame edge).

Private collection.

Leaping Lacewings features the impressive nimble aerobic antics of the common green lacewing (Chrysopidae sp.) as it takes off vertically into flight when disturbed. Their 4 diaphanous wings are able to move asynchronously (independently) from each other allowing great mobility like belly-up flying, loop de loops, pirouetting, parachuting, and sky-diving! My 5 lacewings depicted are doing just that as they frolic through the air.

Lacewings have large delicate translucent and semi-iridescent 'lace-like' wings. Note that I've given particular attention to the illusion of translucent/ see-through wings in the largest lacewing by painting its body features on top of the wing fabric.

The textile wings are made of 2 layers of painted crystal organza with cut-out snippets of organza (pearlescent, fluoro, green, blue, and white) all strategically placed between the 2 layers. All are backed with a sheet of laminating plastic, then stitched together, the excess trimmed off, then backed and turned with white cotton. Finally, the wings are detail-stitched for long veins and cross veins. The lamination plastic insert helps give the wings rigidity as well as light-reflecting credibility, somewhat mimicking real insect wings.

The portrayed species of green lacewing has spectacular big, bright, golden, compound eyes. The specimens in Sale have always had more orange-coloured eyes. In Leaping Lacewings, the eyes are made of recycled fabric-covered buttons, painted in gold and orange with highlights in hand-embroidered stitches.

The antennae are of painted fabric wrapped around wire, and the legs are made of painted cotton pipe-cleaners. The background canvas setting is painted and stitched in thick (topstitching, and buttonhole) threads.

#### LACEWING PENCIL SKETCH 2024

Pencil on paper

61.5 x 81 cm

Private collection.

#### LACEWING COLOUR PLAN 2024

Ink, pastel

61.5 x 81 cm

Private collection.

#### DANCE OF THE MAYFLIES 1988

High relief textile wall work.

110 x 180 x 10(relief) cm.

Collection Gippsland Art Gallery. Donated by John Leslie OBE through the Australian Government Cultural Gifts Program, 2009.

Appliqué, machine embroidery, fabric paint, silk organza, cotton, taffeta, synthetic fur, fabric-covered buttons, on cotton canvas.

Dance of the Mayflies leans towards a mystical interpretation and mood-setting work rather than being a portrayal of mayflies that are absolutely correct in every anatomical detail or colour. It was commissioned by Mr John Leslie OBE in 1987.

The scene is set at dusk with the moon rising. The sky has a soft pink lustre. The heavily embroidered valley and tree line are deliberately contrasted with the relatively plain areas of the rest of the canvas. These simple areas add to the feeling of space, fragility, and flight, and allow the mayflies to be the predominant feature.

Action lines have been added around the wings to increase the sense of movement and upward flight. They are in a variety of pale and dark threads to suit the moon's light and to merge the mayflies and their background environment smoothly.

#### MAYFLY LIFE CYCLE 1988

High relief textile wall work.

133 x 44 x 10(relief) cm.

Collection Gippsland Art Gallery. Donated by John Leslie OBE through the Australian Government Cultural Gifts Program, 2009.

Appliqué, machine embroidery, fabric paint, silk organza, cotton, taffeta, synthetic fur, fabric-covered buttons, on cotton canvas.

Mayflies (Ephemeroptera) began to intrigue me after I collected specimens at Lake Guthridge in Sale and then researched their life cycle for Dance of the Mayflies. This long, thin wall work shows their aquatic life cycle from egg to nymph, and then subimago (or intermediate adult) to airborne adult.

The scientific name of the order, Ephemeroptera, stems from a Greek word meaning 'living a day'. As this suggests, these insects have a short adult life. They are unable to eat once they have emerged from the final nymphal moult. They die within hours of mating. Mayfly eggs are laid on water or submerged vegetation and become anchored by fine threads. They hatch as nymphs that feed under water and shed their skin up to twenty times. These nymphs can live up to three years. At the end of its aquatic life the nymph rises to the surface, its back splits open and a dull coloured, winged insect emerges. It cannot fly well at all. Soon after, it splits again and the fully coloured adult with glittering translucent wings appears. This occurrence of a subimago is unique in the insect world.

## BLUEY – THE HAIRY FLOWER WASP 2025

Textile sculpture – mobile

60 x 65 x 40 cm

Private collection.

The female Blue Hairy Flower Wasp (*Austroscolia soror*) is a spectacular insect to watch effortlessly gliding and hovering just above ground level in search of food for her young. She stings and paralyzes grubs, beetles, or weevils and lays one egg on each of her prey. The wasp itself feeds on flower nectar. It is large (up to 3 cm long) with a black hairy body. The wings have a distinctive metallic/iridescent blue, aqua, and purple sheen.

Of all the insects in my 'Stranger than Fiction' series, this wasp was the most complex and challenging to make in every aspect such as colour, shape, fabric techniques, and especially the construction.

Finding the 'just right' fabric for the hairy parts of the wasp was finally resolved with the purchase of a hairy black knitted jacket in an Opportunity Shop. A face mask had to be worn when cutting the fabric as miniscule polyester fibres were released which rushed straight up my nose causing coughing and sneezing. Frequent vacuum cleaning was required and essential.

Other than the wasp wings, the insect was hand-stitched. Black stitches on black fabric required a powerful spotlight. A curved surgical needle was used to stitch through the deep curves of the wasp's thorax, and to stretch the furry knit around the body.

Internal wiring holds the body sections together. Heavy 2-ply PVC-covered wire runs from the sting end through the body to behind the eyes. Two perforated aluminium plates in the thorax support the 4 wings and 6 legs. Each wing also has pieces of the same perforated aluminium plate inserted to keep them upright. Chicken wire shapes were made for the abdomen and head. These were then wrapped with self-adhesive bandages (recycled from my husband's Blood Bank donation dressings).

Materials: furry polyester knit, felt, cotton, crystal organza, net, Dacron, self-adhesive bandage, Heat bond, iron-on interfacing, metallic synthetics, chicken wire, perforated aluminium plate, 2.2 mm PVC-covered wire, copper wire, machine sewing threads, cord, glass beads.

## THE FLUFFY BUM NYMPH 2025

Textile sculpture – mobile.

75 x 60 x 90 cm

Private collection.

'Fluffy Bum' is the common colloquial name for the passion vine hopper (*Scolytopa australis*). It is an extraordinary, almost unreal-looking insect. They are 'groupies' and hide away in foliage bunched together, sucking plant sap and leaving a honeydew secretion that ants and bees love. Ten of these tiny insects would cover my thumbnail. Why they have these long white fluffy filaments at the end of their abdomen is a mystery.

Those who have experienced these nymphs will know them by their magnificent leap into the air when they are

disturbed. My theory is that the fluffy bum gives them a soft landing!

Inspiration for this work came from my gardener husband presenting me with a clutch of about 50 hoppers after pruning the lemon tree. They really took my fancy and especially after learning their (appropriate) common name! The hardest part of making this work was visually interpreting the 'fluffy bum' aspect with credibility in textile/fibre. Some 40 different textures were trialled and failed. Finally, I decided on mixed bunches of stiffened sisal, white wire, spray painted cotton-covered florist wire, recycled paper-covered wire, white plastic grass-like leaves, and artificial flower pieces.

The rest of the hopper's body is made of 2 layers of painted silk organza on top of white synthetic felt with an internal polyester filler. The antennae and legs are of painted net wrapped around PVC-covered wire. Structural supports include 2-ply 1.6 mm PVC-covered wire, 2 perforated aluminium plates, fine copper wire, gauge 3 fishing sinkers, and metal eyelets.

Materials: Textile paint, silk organza, synthetic felt, iron-on fibres, polyester filler, gabardine, recycled woven gold thread fabric (Indian), pipe cleaners, copper wire, metal eyelets, plastic tubing, glass beads, and a variety of machine embroidery threads.

## ABOVE THE CHANNELS 1982

Three low-relief wall panels

90 x 90 cm each

Collection Gippstand Art Gallery. Gift of Chris Geckeler, 2025.

The central panel depicts the Channels Gorge on the Avon River near Newry from a bird's eye view. It shows the mountainous and rocky terrain in the misty light of an early morning. Attention is focused on the intensively stitched 'window framed' area, while the plainer, unstitched surrounding canvas suggests continuing space and mystery. This panel creates the setting for the two adjoining panels.

The left panel shows a damselfly pair (*Austroagrion*) in their tandem mating flight above the water. They are portrayed in their most vulnerable state as the blue male struggles to keep height with his heavy female burden. The damselflies are also 'window framed' to suggest the limited time remaining for them; below them the water churns and fleetingly reflects their image. Two lives are about to end, and another life cycle is about to begin.

In the right panel a Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sancta*) has caught a male damselfly in mid-flight. He is completely free and unrestricted, able to catch his food on the wing at great speed. His action lines over the water, his shadow and flight path, together with the dancing ring of water as he clips the surface chasing his prey, were all accentuated to suggest rapid movement. His prey is the male damselfly on the left panel. So, life continues.

Above the Channels was the first work in which I used heavy artist's canvas as a background fabric. I had become increasingly involved in the use of textile paints and fibre

dyes with their subtle colour-toning possibilities. The washed-out appearance of the mist, hills, rocks, and distant landscape was achieved by mixing textile paints to watercolour consistency and applying them to a damp canvas. The paint work was deliberately kept as simple and unobtrusive as possible to achieve the final 'out of focus' but 'continuous space' effect. Also, it allowed the detailed focal area to stand out even more dominantly once the machine sewing was added.

Selected for the international travelling exhibition 'Australian Craft '83' organised by the Crafts Council of Australia, this work was exhibited in Sydney, London, Edinburgh, and Hong Kong.

#### THE SHEEP BLOWFLY LIFE CYCLE 1995

High relief textile wall sculpture on two levels

76 x 92 x 6 cm.

Gippsland Art Gallery collection. Purchased with the assistance of the John Leslie Foundation, 2022.

Three stages of the sheep blowfly life cycle are windowed in recesses on a lower surface plane behind the main canvas. None of the stages are in scale to each other. Instead, I have concentrated on accentuating the beauty, colour and texture of each stage of development in a combination of realism and abstract design.

The work was designed and made in five main parts:

1. The overall uniting canvas featuring a farmland scene, with sheep, trees, a creek, low-lying fog in a valley and a distant mountain range. A green rectangle was painted on this to set off the red-eyed fly.
2. The mature adult sheep blowfly clinging to the green rectangle was made separately. The fly was broken down into ten individual parts and each piece made separately.
3. The eggs of the sheep blowfly.
4. Eggs hatching into larvae in the midst of a wound.
5. The pupae, burrowed under the soil, and in their pupal cases.

Techniques: painting (silk organza, crystal organza and canvas), machine stitching (tailor tacking, free-sewing, and straight stitch), hand embroidery (bullion knots, stem stitch and long stitch), trapunto, beading, quilting, padding, plying, steam moulding, unravelling.

Material used: canvas, silk and crystal organza, satin, silk, nylon, lamination plastic, beads, velour, lurex, combed wool, embroidery silk and cotton, machine threads, dacron filler.

#### FLY STUDY 1995

High-relief textile wall panel.

80 x 83 x 6 cm

Gippsland Art Gallery collection.

Donated by Dr Max Whitten, 2025

Many of us are squeamish around flies, maggots, blood and rotting flesh. I confess that they are not my favourite subjects either, as their life cycle is rather gruesome. Yet, as I have discovered before, many insects considered

distasteful are really quite beautiful when viewed closely. I had been asked by the staff of the CSIRO (Division of Entomology) to design and make a small sheep blowfly textile for the retiring head of department, Dr Max Whitten, as one of his major research projects has been the sheep blowfly (*Lucilia cuprina*). This fly belongs to the Calliphoridae family which, in Greek, means 'bearer of great beauty' - an apt description.

Wonderful references, specimens of the whole life cycle, colour photographs and electron microscope pictures arrived at the studio. Current projects were put aside and before I realised it, I was deep into the subject, and I stayed there for nearly two years. Four major works have been made as a result of these endeavours – Flystrike (The Sheep Blowfly) 1995, Fly Study 1995, The Sheep Blowfly Life Cycle 1995, and Invasion 1996 - as well as smaller works – On The Edge 1995, Filial Fly 1996, The Blowie 1996, Feral Fly 1997 - and some works on paper.

Techniques: painting (silk organza, crystal organza, canvas), machine stitching (tailor tacking, free-sewing, straight stitch), hand embroidery (bullion knots, stem stitch, long stitch), trapunto, beading, quilting, padding, plying, steam moulding, unravelling.

Materials: canvas, silk and crystal organza, satin, silk, nylon, lamination plastic, beads, velour, lurex, combed wool, embroidery silk and cotton, machine threads, dacron filler.

#### INVASION 1996

Mounted on two levels.

High-relief wall panel.

125 x 117 x 6 cm.

Private collection.

Without the flies, the scenery of trees, hills and creek bed would be idyllic for pleasurable pastimes such as picnicking, bushwalking or camping. But then, there are the flies - all gloriously clothed in their metallic armoury, and all passionate about sharing our company.

The two distinct levels of 'Invasion' were designed to highlight and focus the design towards the paler central panel featuring a black-and-white fly and a metallic green fly.

All the colourful flies are screen printed on calico, then painted, stitched, padded with dacron, quilted and hand embroidered for wispy body hairs. These hairs stand out in a relief of several centimetres from their bodies. The black-and-white fly is tonal washed in blues and discreetly stitched with silver metallic thread.

Thousands of tiny airborne flies are painted and stitched into the darker sky area of the top panel.

#### SHOWCASE 1

##### DIVING BLUE-BILLED DUCK 1992

Workbook samples showing trials, errors, methods, and techniques.

##### SHOWCASE 2

##### BLOWFLIES

Workbook samples showing trials, errors, methods, and techniques.