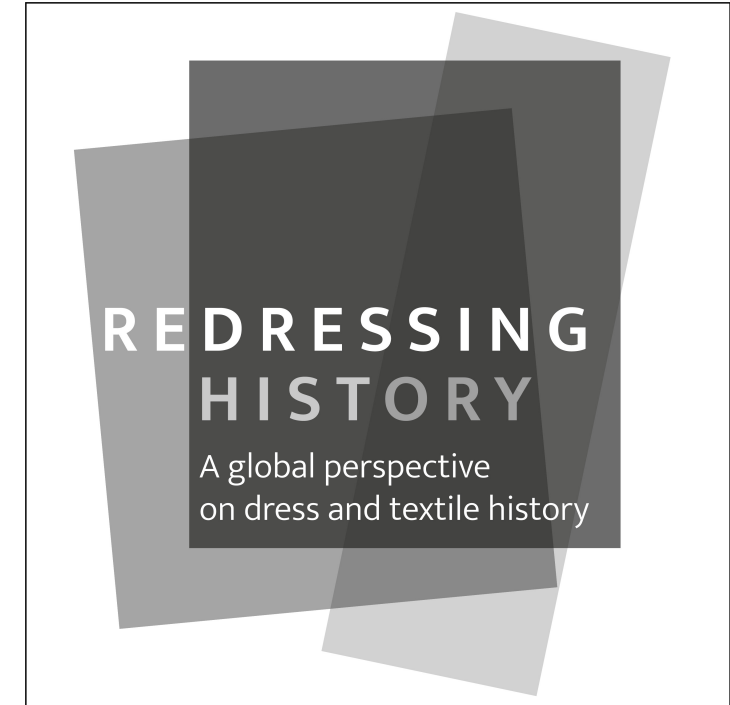
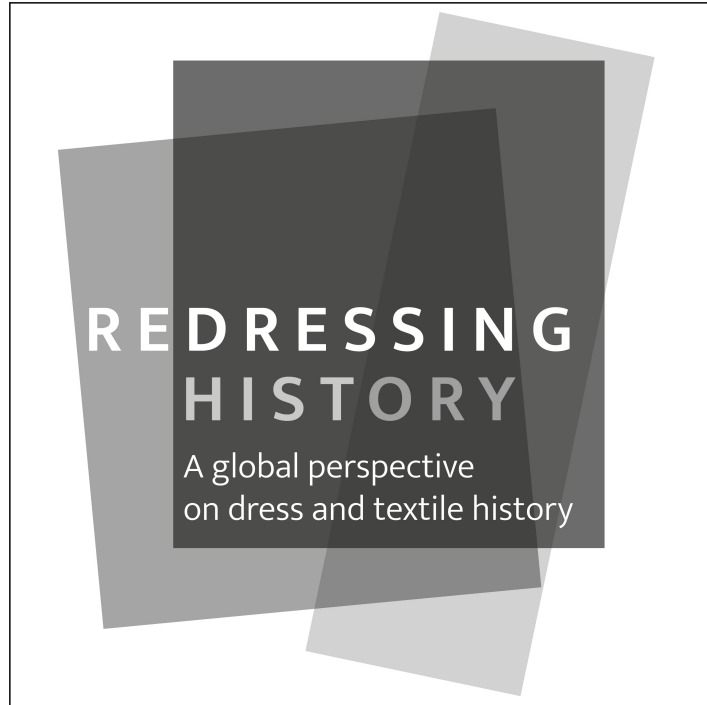


Redressing History

A conversation with Jacqueline Bishop



Writer, Researcher and Visual Artist

Learn more about her work here:

<https://jacquelineabishop.com/>

Overview

In July 2021 I spoke with writer, researcher and visual artist Jacqueline Bishop. Our conversation centred around her work, together with the textile art produced by the women who continue to inspire her practice.

You can hear our conversation in full and learn about other podcasts in the series here:

<https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/centrefordesignhistory/blog/redressing-history/>

Important themes which emerged through our discussion included:

- Finding – or making – a sense of place
- Valuing female craft and art
- Textiles – and particularly Patchworks - as carriers of meaning, memories and stories
- Textile traditions and techniques which are specific to Jamaica
- How to value and record the 'traces' of artists whose work has not traditionally had place within museums or academic discourse

We hope you enjoy listening to this podcast and discovering further conversations in the series.

– Dr Veronica Isaac



Two examples
of the quilts
created by
Jacqueline
Bishop
© Jacqueline
Bishop.

Generations of women – connected through textiles and making

In the podcast we discuss the lives and work of six women:

- Jacqueline's great grandmother (Celeste Walker)
- Her grandmother (Emma Chin-See)
- Her grand aunt (Theresa Walker)
- Her mother (Marjorie Bishop)
- Her aunt-in-law (Sane Mae Dunkley)
- And Jacqueline herself



Above: A compilation image created by Jacqueline one Mother's Day
© Jacqueline Bishop [From Right to left it shows Jacqueline's great grandmother, her grandmother, her mother and herself.]

As she discussed, this image has come to take on new meanings for her as she has started to 'work on, and work through, their work'

My Great-Grandmother: Celeste Walker

'Patchworks is an aesthetic' and
'Quilting is about the layers that goes
on behind it.'

My Great-Grandmother was
interested in 'how she lay down cloth
next to cloth and the stories she was
telling with cloth. She wasn't adding
heft and layers and cotton wools
behind it'

These patchworks were 'special
occasion' textiles, only brought out
for specific events (Christmas,
Birthdays, celebrations).



Left, Jacqueline's Great-Grandmother, Celeste Walker with some of her work,
Right her daughter, Theresa with her own patchwork © Jacqueline Bishop

Patchworks as a form of memory and memorialisation

My great-grandmother used patchwork as a 'form of memory and memorialisation' and 'I think she was really pulling on Sub-Saharan traditions'. She 'assigned various members of her family colours' and so 'her patchworks were to tell stories of her family. She had a whole aesthetic that she had worked out in her mind [...] associated with the ways in which Sub-Saharan Africans use the narrow strip weave loom'

I wish I could talk to her and ask 'what do the colours mean?'



A further example of Celeste Walker's Patchworks © Jacqueline Bishop.

Designed objects with a distinct aesthetic

'If you look at the rhythmic ways in which she uses pattern and the vibrancy of her work, I think I see very strong connections to Sub-Saharan traditions in her work. The ways in which we see similar things in the Gee's Bend quilts, for example'

She used to say 'I have to get the piece to start it. And once I get the piece to start it, I can go'.

'They were laying things out - It was designed, [...] it was very much designed'

'In some ways this was her legacy for those who had the eyes to see [...] this was something she was bequeathing to generations to come'



A further example of Celeste Walker's
Patchworks © Jacqueline Bishop.

Always out of place

'I realised lately, that I'm always out of place, or people are trying to put me in my place. Place is very important in my life'

'I always felt like Oh my God I'm so dumb here, because everybody can name, all these artists that they're in conversation with [...] I was so out of place, that the only artist that I could look to [...] were my great grandmother and my grandmother.'

'when I started to make visual art or something like that, the only models, I could think of were the women in my family.'

'[...]because I did not know these big time artists, that I was supposed to [...] I keep having the conversation with people that I did know that were making art around me.'



Collage, a work encapsulating the 'patchwork aesthetic' which continues to influence Jacqueline's practise.

© Jacqueline Bishop.

A writer finding and making a place for her stories

'[...] People say, Oh, she tells so many untold stories and I think, well, yes, and I accept that. I like that. I embrace that but, in some ways, what is actually working out is my 'out of placeness' and then, in turn, engaging with the people who are not in the museums [...] and - engaging them in my aesthetic.'



'Folly' © Jacqueline Bishop.



Questioning established narratives

'I was making these collages [and] I realized that what I was doing was a couple of things - I was responding back to the dishes that I saw in my grandmother's house, my great grandmother's house, my mother's house [...] For Jamaican women, one of the ways that you signify that you're a woman - you've achieved this threshold, apart from having children and buying your bedroom set, is having a cabinet with dishes [...] And there were narratives on these dishes. And these were narratives of palaces and carriages [...] and I started asking myself - what the hell was behind those narratives, that are so different to the lives that we were living? And so I ended up of course at slavery.'



Images from 'History at the Dinner Table' © Jacqueline Bishop.

<https://gallery.jennyharperphotography.com/bcbjacquelinebishopplates>



My Grandmother: Emma Chin-See

'So much of Jamaican Identity is actually British Identity'

'What was interesting to me about this piece is [...] that the design elements are much stronger here [...] I think – Ah – Ok - High Victorianism is coming in here [...] She's much more – what some would say – 'creolised' than my great grandmother was. My great grandmother seemed to be working with a much more African palette, much more African Aesthetic than my grandmother was. My grandmother has elements that you could say, ok I see British elements in this'



A patchwork created by Emma Chin-See © Jacqueline Bishop.

My grand aunt: Theresa Walker

'I love [...] that she's here with her granddaughter [...] The granddaughter is a reluctant witness, but she's a witness nevertheless to the traditions being passed on [...] And if you think of the fact that none of these works [...] have ever showed up in National Gallery of Jamaica for example. Then you'll see how these traditions occupy a different art world [...] In some ways what is most important about this picture is not so much the quilt per say, as who is in the quilt and the hidden art worlds that become visible in this quilt'



A photograph of Theresa Walker holding a patchwork with her grandchild. © Jacqueline Bishop.

My mother: Marjorie Bishop

'The best of my mother's work is lost. So much of women's work is lost. When she migrated from Jamaica to the US so much of her work got lost'

My mother went back to this [...] after retirement, but I remember, especially when she was pregnant, the elaborate pieces that she used to make and I'm glad she's gone back to it. [...] She was making pieces for the home [...] There were so many pieces around me, for tabletops for sofas, for the home.'

I remember my mother teaching me, how to make my little stitch[...] and I wish I could do it more now as a visual artist...'



'Crochet is harder to find because they do not signify in the way that embroidery does' - A selection of crochet work created by Jacqueline's mother: Marjorie Bishop.

© Jacqueline Bishop.

My aunt-in-law: Sane Mae Dunkley

'I'd known Sane Mae all my life, but I did not know that this was within her'

'Fantastic work, fantastic work I could go on all day about her work - about Sane Mae Dunkley's work' [...] if we look at these three pieces, for example, nationalism jumps out to us right, so the red green and the gold is, of course, the Rastafarian colours, but I also see the US flag colours as well and the middle piece would traditionally be read as the Creole piece, because of the Multi colours.' [...] How she worked [...] was she would have an image in mind, like, for example, she would say. Oh, this is going to be the Garden of Eden [...]



Examples of the fabric artwork produced by Jacqueline's aunt-in-law, Sane Mae Dunkley. © Jacqueline Bishop.

'[...] she told me a fantastic story of growing up in St Elizabeth, and that it was the men in her family, who were the needleworkers [...] I surely thought this could not be right [...] But [...] as I started to do my research [...] I discovered that] needlework traditions in Africa in sub-Saharan Africa - it's gendered male [...] And so the men in her family were doing the embroidery and they were making these mats and they were doing all these needlework traditions - that she learned from the men in her family.'



Two further examples of the fabric 'mats' (formed from strips of fabric) produced by Jacqueline's aunt-in-law, Sane Mae Dunkley.
© Jacqueline Bishop.



Making a place: 'it's definitely organic and it's definitely dynamic, and it's definitely frustrating'

'Now, finding my place is, of course, talking about how I stumbled into just looking at the women around me as my artistic predecessors [...] people would say to me [...] who are you in conversation with and I wouldn't know what to say [...] the only thing about what springs to mind was my grandmother, and my great grandmother, Sane May Dunkley, and my mother crocheting [...] Those were really the people that I was in conversation with'



A quilt created by
Jacqueline Bishop ©
Jacqueline Bishop.

A patchwork created
by Theresa Walker
© Jacqueline Bishop.



Find out more about Jacqueline and her work



- Jacqueline's personal website: <https://jacquelineabishop.com/>
- Images of the plates Jacqueline produced for her recent project - 'History at the Dinner Table' and which were featured in the *British Ceramics Biennial* <https://gallery.jennyharperphotography.com/bcbjacquelinebishoppates/>
- An article Jacqueline wrote about her for SX Salon in February 2021 - 'All Our Mother's were not famous' - <http://www.smallaxe.net/sxsalon/discussions/all-our-mothers-were-not-famous>

- A podcast interview discussing Jacqueline's work as a writer from *Like a Real Bookclub* "The One with Jacqueline Bishop". May 2021. <https://share.transistor.fm/s/2db6be03>
- Cheryl Sterling, Associate Professor of English at Pennsylvania State University has written about Jacqueline's work as a visual artist. See her articles:
 - Jacqueline Bishop Jamaica Views, Frames, Vistas and Images" *Wasafiri* 30:1 (2015): 17-25.
 - "Tristes Tropique in Jacqueline Bishop's Patchwork Aesthetics." *African Arts*, 53.1, (2020): 38-49.



To discover more about the textiles, techniques and themes we explored

- Read about *Marianne North* and the Gallery dedicated to her work at Kew Gardens here: <https://www.kew.org/kew-gardens/whats-in-the-gardens/marianne-north-gallery>
- Learn more about the *Gees Bend Quilt Makers*: <https://www.soulsgrowndeeep.org/gees-bend-quiltmakers>
- Start learning about the life and work of Rhoda Jackson <https://nationalgalleryofjamaica.wordpress.com/2015/10/02/jamaicas-art-pioneers-rhoda-jackson-1913-1971/>
- Read about other textiles which have become carriers of memory and meaning in *All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a black family keepsake* by Tiya Miles (London: Random House, 2021)
- Discover more about Quilts and Patchwork in Jacqueline Tobin and Raymond G. Dobard. *Hidden in Plain View: A Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad*. New York: Anchor Books, 2000.
- If you're interested in learning more about connections between Dress, Textiles, Identity and Race explore books such as:
 - Steeve O Buckridge. *The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760-1890*. Mona, Kingston: Univ. of the West Indies Pr, 2004.
 - Helen B. Foster, and Donald C. Johnson. *Dress Sense: Emotional and Sensory Experiences of the Body and Clothes*. Oxford: Berg, 2007.
 - Carol Tulloch. *The Birth of Cool: Style Narratives of the African Diaspora*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.



Both images
© Jacqueline
Bishop –
Details of
'Comrade'

The logo graphic consists of three overlapping squares in shades of gray. The central square is the darkest and contains the text 'REDRESSING HISTORY' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The other two squares are lighter and positioned behind and to the sides of the central one.

REDRESSING HISTORY

A global perspective
on dress and textile history

We would like to thank the University of Brighton's Centre for Design History (CDH) and the University of Brighton's Equality and Inclusion fund for funding which enabled us to pay speaker fees and cover professional editing costs for the podcast series.

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