

# *I dream of a world where* **LOVE IS THE ANSWER**

## EXPLORING THE RESTORATIVE POWERS OF LOVE AND COMMUNITY

MO ORKISZEWSKI is an artist and bookbinder living in Sydney with Rod Morgan (aka Old Man Crow), musician and songwriter. 'I dream of a world where love is the answer' is the culmination of a project originating in 2017 with the gift of an old wedding dress. Mo turned this into a collaborative work bringing together a worldwide circle of 70 art and craft practitioners, its purpose 'to make connections, communicate a sense of how we belong to our earth, that each person has value, each moment of reaching out has potential, and collectively lighting a beacon of awareness and respect for our planet Earth'.

## MAKING IT AND UNMAKING IT

Mo: 'So I was given an old hand-stitched wedding dress... I have never believed in marriage and don't like wedding dresses but this had wonderful detail and the heaviness of the satin in contrast with the tulle ignited ideas about building castles in the air with dreams, or perhaps simply planting it in the garden and growing a meadow of wildflowers through it!...



Right: Bronwyn Berman,  
Australia  
*Burning with Love*,  
720mm x 250mm  
Burned letters bound with  
gold thread to the root  
of a river sheoak

Left: Mo Orkiszewski, 2017  
*The First Cut*

'It brought to mind my friend Bronwyn Berman's great reply to a conversation we were having about 'making it' in the art world.'

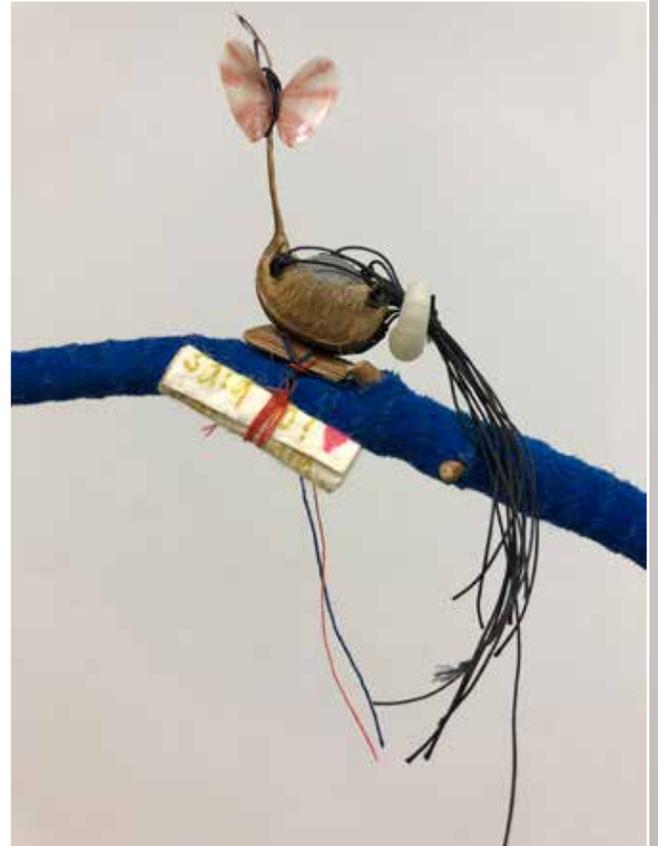
Berman: 'And what is *made it* or *almost made it*? My experience is that we make it then we unmake it. I think I've made it more than once but thought I hadn't made it so kept on wanting to make it. Then when it had been unmade again I realised that I had made and not appreciated it.'

'Then I think that really what I have now is 'making it', then I think I'm a deluded 'has been' who is too old to ever make it! (and in any case couldn't be bothered with too much of 'making it'). I think we're probably always making it. As soon as we make it the unmaking begins and when we're unmade then we start making again.'

Berman's riff evoked a shared appreciation and sympathy from Mo's correspondents.

So Mo cut the dress into 45 pennants and put out a call to anyone interested in taking a pennant and stitching into it their hopes and dreams. This would be a collaborative project, gathering together a worldwide circle – as Mo says, 'joining hearts and hands for mending our beautiful broken world'.

The call went out, around the world, and resulted in all pennants being claimed by the following day and so Mo invited those who



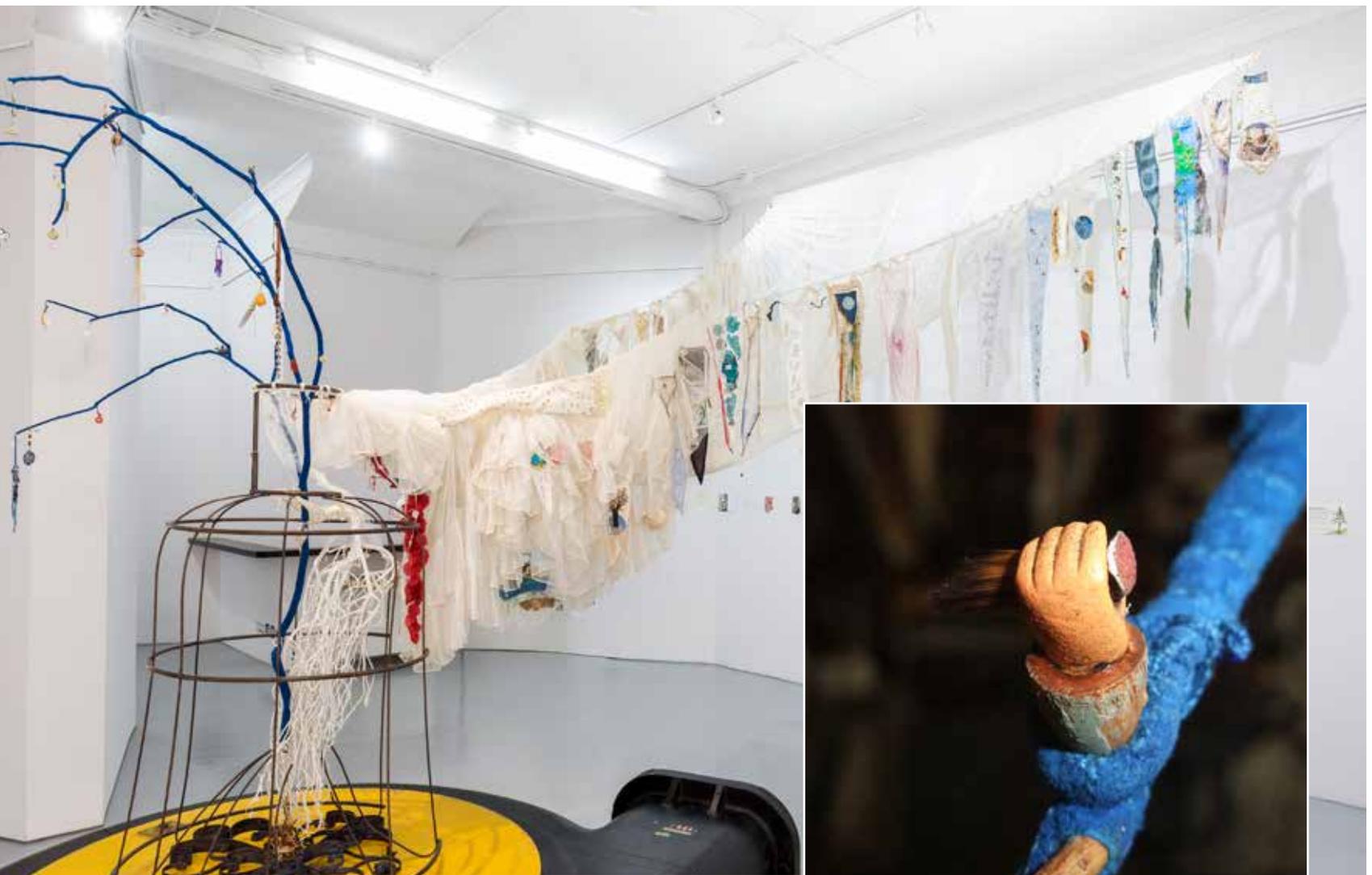
Left:  
Saskia van Herwaarden, The Netherlands  
A talisman of love and healing for our beautiful broken world, 70mm x 25mm Seed, bone, turquoise for healing, feather, plant dyed cloth, silver wire

Above:  
Liz D'Achille, Australia, Talisman  
*All Aboard*, 50mm x 50mm  
The ingredients:  
Base, a woodchip from my garden  
Boat, segment of native pipe vine seed pod sourced from my garden, Vine planted by me when the bush next door was bulldozed and the butterflies disappeared. Food source of the Cairns birdwing.  
Thread, 2/0 red silk used in surgery to tie off blood vessels  
Moon, reflective sphere used in joint replacements to navigate the knee joint to assist assimilate prosthesis to native structures  
Sails, tiny butterfly shell found when I walked onto King Reef, Great Barrier Reef on the King tide  
Rudder, snail shell found geocaching at Kurramine Beach FNZ  
Permabond, skin glue for humans  
Scroll, poem on handmade paper

Opposite: Anita Larkin, Australia, Talisman  
Found objects combined with a touch of whimsy and quiet strength 15mm x 15mm  
Courtesy of Defiance Gallery, Enmore, Sydney



*OH*



Exhibition at Artsite Gallery, Sydney  
Photography John McRae

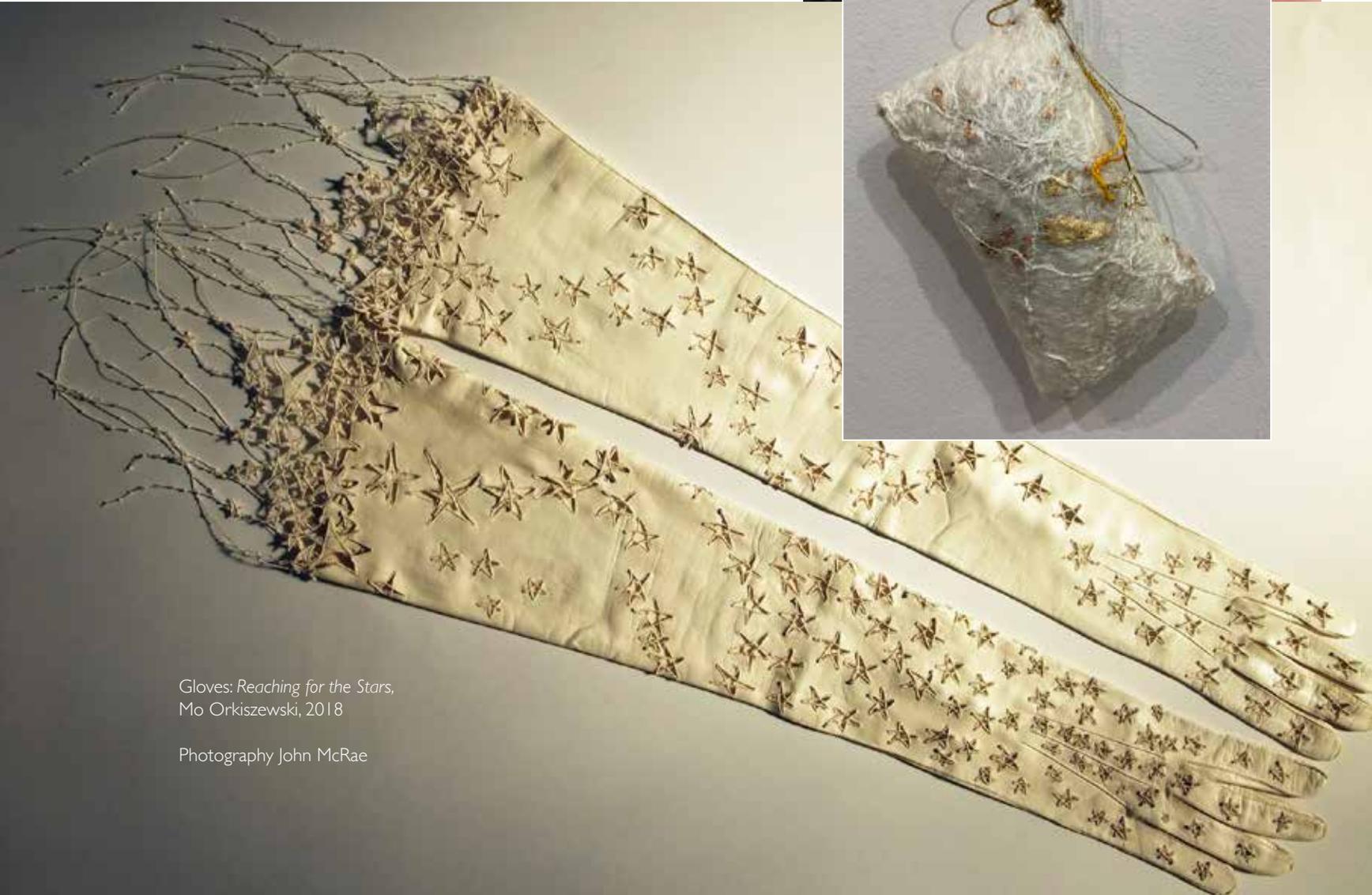
had missed out on pennants to contribute small talismans of love and protection for our world.

The resulting collection of pennants and talismans was exhibited at Artsite Gallery in Sydney during March this year.

Mo sees 'making art as an act of reverence, a magic spell cast into the world to heal the divisions; to mend the desecration and bind the world with love and respect that speaks of connection. It communicates a sense of how we belong to our planet, that each

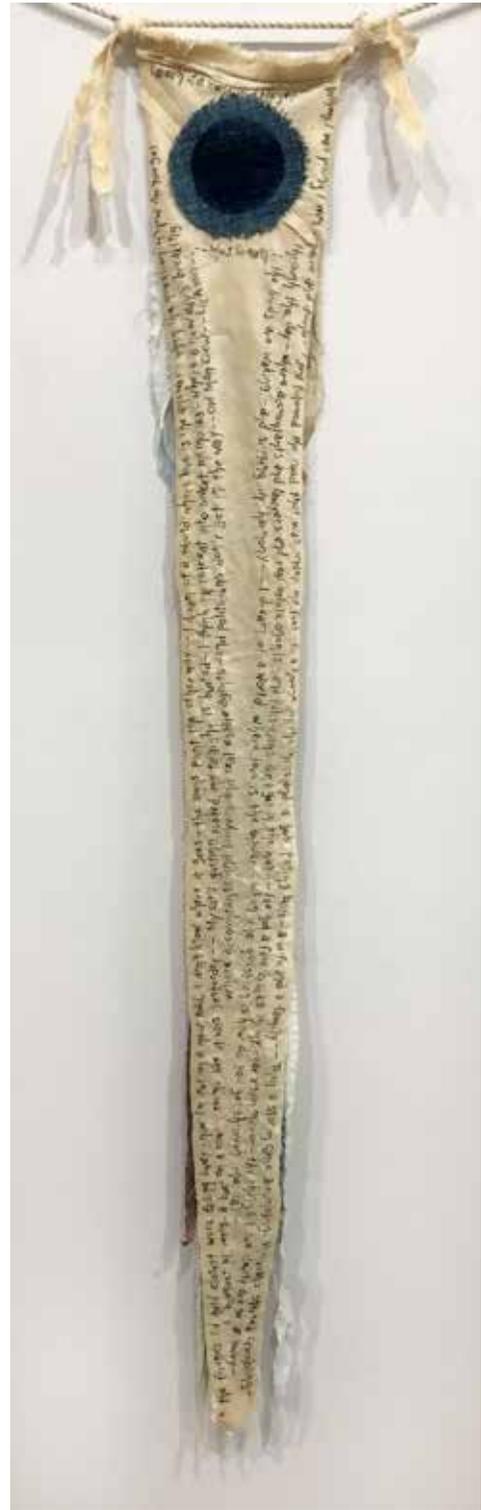
Right:: Two Talismans  
Barry Smith, Australia  
Recycled silver and brass, silver and crystal beads, stamped with 'love is the answer'

Lizette Campbell, Australia  
*Love is the answer to heal our beautiful broken world,*  
100mm x 60mm  
'My talisman comes with a sense of optimism and hope. It contains feathers from a pair of Tawny Frogmouths roosting in our garden, words of prayer & inspiration and symbols that resonate with energy and healing stitched onto sheer organza wrapped in a small piece of nuno felt using fine merino, silk and alpaca, sprinkled with gold and copper leaf trapped under a layer of Uzbekistan silk | pintucked with lines to represent the paths we take.'



Gloves: *Reaching for the Stars*,  
Mo Orkiszewski, 2018

Photography John McRae



person has value, that each moment of reaching out has potential. Collectively we are shining a beacon for understanding, making strong threads with love and singing.'

Mo lives in Newtown in Sydney. Nearby a square industrial building had been tagged high up in an almost unreachable place with the message: *Love is the answer*. This became emblematic for Mo and her international collaborators with the prefix *I dream of a world where...* And Old Man Crow wrote one of his characteristically lilting and touching songs with the same title to accompany the show.

This page: Liz Ackert, USA  
*I dream of a world where love is the answer,*  
 970mm x 140mm - front and reverse  
 Lichen dyed and layered with hand stitched words from Old Man Crow, Terry Tempest Williams, Wendell Berry, John Lennon, Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Dee Mallon, Marti in New Mexico and Mo on cloth and threads dyed by Ulrike Bogdan (Nemo ignorant), Hazel Monte (Handstories), Deb Lacativa (More Whiffs, Glimmers & Left Oeuvres), Dee Mallon (Pattern and Outrage), Glennis Dolce (Shibori Girl) and Liz's own hand



Over the following months the cluttered rooms of Mo's tiny terrace house were filled with delicate and beautifully stitched pennants and strange and colourful talismans. Just one man contributed to the project, with a handmade beaten metal talisman. While over half of those contributing were from Australia and NZ, almost as many contributed from the USA and Canada and there was a strong contingent from the UK and Europe.

There were few conditions imposed on the makers — artists were at liberty to interpret their message in any style or form they wished. Mo described the skirt which she cut up into pennants: 'The cloth is weighty, old and full of story; hold it in your hands, listen with your heart and dream.. then do whatever feels right - fray or bind the edges, burn if that's your turn, add bits of cloth or special beads, feathers, stones, bones, paint or dye, stitch or just fill it with good vibes...'

Many responded to Mo's thoughts about the wedding dress on her blog and some quoted words of favourite and memorable songs: There's Joni Mitchell's 'long white dress of love'. Song for Sharon: *Some girl's going to see that dress and crave that day like crazy*. Then: *And when I went skating after Golden Reggie, You know it was white lace I was chasing, Chasing dreams. Mama's nylons underneath my cowgirl jeans, He showed me first you get the kisses, And then you get the tears, But the ceremony of the bells and lace, Still veils this reckless fool here.*

For the talismans, Mo asked that they be small – 1.5 cm x 1.5 cm. 'They may be made of anything that speaks from the heart of love for our beautiful broken world – cloth, stitch, metal, buttons, feathers, shells, stone, bone, wood, paper etc.' She warned that overseas contributors would need to clean the article thoroughly and declare it on the customs form because of Australia's strict quarantine rules. They should be jewellery-scale like Mexican *milagros*. She reminded us: 'A talisman is something thought to be imbued with some magical property, it can both protect and radiate power...'. In these times we need all the help we can get.

Mo referred to Naomi Klein's *No is not enough: Resisting Trump's Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need* which she was reading at the time: 'Our beautiful broken world is in a very precarious place; the hollow men that have made this corporate coup are paper tigers. We can make them irrelevant with love for our beautiful planet

Left:  
Jude Hill, USA  
*Love Takes Time*, 880mm x 200mm  
Layered, appliqued, woven and hand embroidered with the needle and thread left in, Marking Time.

and caring for each other, but things are going to get very strange in the process.' (Mo).

What has resulted from this project has been heart-felt and extraordinarily touching. Some of the descriptions which came with the exhibits and the responses and the messages sent by Mo's friends and colleagues around the world which Mo placed on her blog bring one close to tears – at least that was my experience. Mine, perhaps, the tears of a woman sharing that extraordinary sense of community with others who also feel for our fragile world — with fear but also with hope.

**Carolynne Skinner**

The full catalogue of contributors, pennants and talismans and Old Man Crow's song are at [www.itscrowtime.wordpress.com](http://www.itscrowtime.wordpress.com)

*The Illustrated Lyrics of Old Man Crow* is the most recent collaboration of Mo Orkiszewski and Rod Morgan

Artsite Gallery is at 165 Salisbury Road, Camperdown [www.artsite.com.au](http://www.artsite.com.au)



Above:  
Arlee Barr; Canada  
*Love is Respect*,  
450mm x 180mm  
Layered with onlays,  
applique & hand embroidery  
cane and red hot poker leaves

Left:  
*The First Cut*, 2017  
Mo Orkiszewski

