

Anna Torma with Ilona Klocza

Red Fragments

Textile assemblage with Hungarian folk art, commercial and silkscreen prints, woman's handwork, hand embroidery on North American quilt patterns (touchable)

200 cm x 30 ft. 2017

The subject matter of this exhibition is traditional red Hungarian folk embroidery pattern, used by an elderly person hit by a stroke. In parallel, in my work I re-use, cut and stitch similar patterns to create wall pieces for exhibition after having immigration to Canada seeking new identity and visual language.

The medium is textile. I am fascinated by textiles, hand embroidery and sewing, telling stories with hand-stitched, often salvaged materials formed into assemblages. In this installation I use textiles pieces from with authentic Hungarian red cross stitch patterns as a starting point. As the fragmentation theme develops, a new kind of beauty arises.

The textile assemblage allows me to use a wide range of subjects and to show the connections between them. You might want to compare the domestic uses of hand embroidery with my artistic approach to re-arrange my inherited folk culture, to make a new aesthetic in a new home-place.

A few years ago I lost my dear relative, Ilona, in Hungary. We lived separate lives, divided by my immigration. She became an elderly person without feeling the close warmth of immediate family. This fact disturbed me greatly, and I figured out an embroidery project which could be conducted over distance, with occasional personal visits.

The traditional cross stitch and hand embroidery patterns with red yarn are well known in Hungary; we all learned the patterns and technique as kids. I encouraged Ilona to make new pieces, even after her stroke, when she could barely move her hands. When she turned 90 she moved to an old people's home. She was determined to adjust herself to the change; the handwork came again to help. It occupied her hands while her thoughts were with us.

My installation work Red Fragments records this collaboration and also re-visits my immigrant past through my folk art heritage. I want to point out with this installation the tension between coherent designs and fragments, the beauty of unfinished works. The embroidery fragments show the persistence and "try again" attitude until the prepared small canvases with the red-threaded needle run empty, unable to be touched by her hands any more.