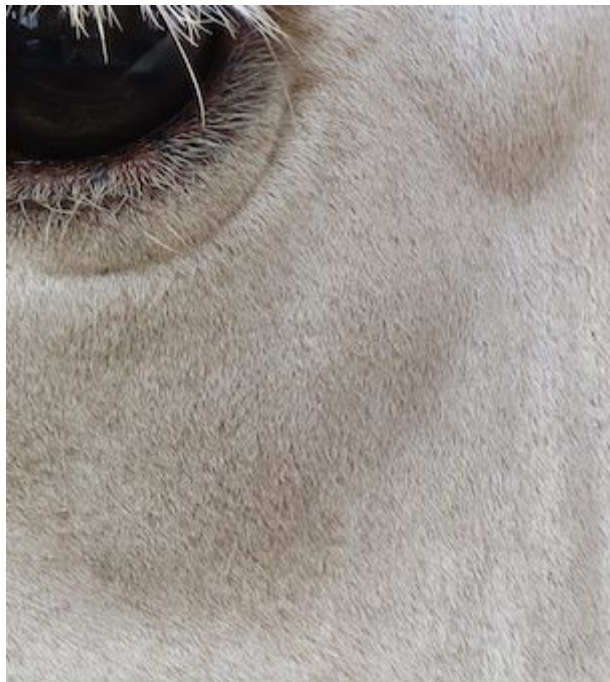


Inspiration & Outcome



I thought August was going to be a focused studio month but James and I accepted the challenge of various 'sitting' duties as frantic parents ran out of steam across the summer holidays and needed help with child care. We subsequently needed help with energy levels so in the last week of August spent 6 days sailing around the tiny islands off the Croatian mainland. I travelled almost technology-free (no camera, no ipad, no laptop - just a phone that was turned off for most of the trip), wanting instead to be at one with the elements - plenty of sun, no rain to speak of and a nice breeze to fill the sails.

I returned to a very small window for writing this month's blog as a teaching week beckons in Germany. I did take a few photographs on my 'phone whilst on holiday and began to think about what I'm drawn to when getting a camera out. As a result I reviewed my 'inspiration' folders and selected a cross-section of images, avoiding landscape as that's my normal default!

I've seen, studied and photographed many 'things' across the years but few make it into actual artworks. That's not to say I discard those images. They still give me pleasure and it's always interesting to look at them with fresh eyes and assess what drew me to them in the first place.

Her Quiet Materials

Having started with the eye of a cow I've continued with this same animal, standing patiently in line waiting to be pregnancy tested.



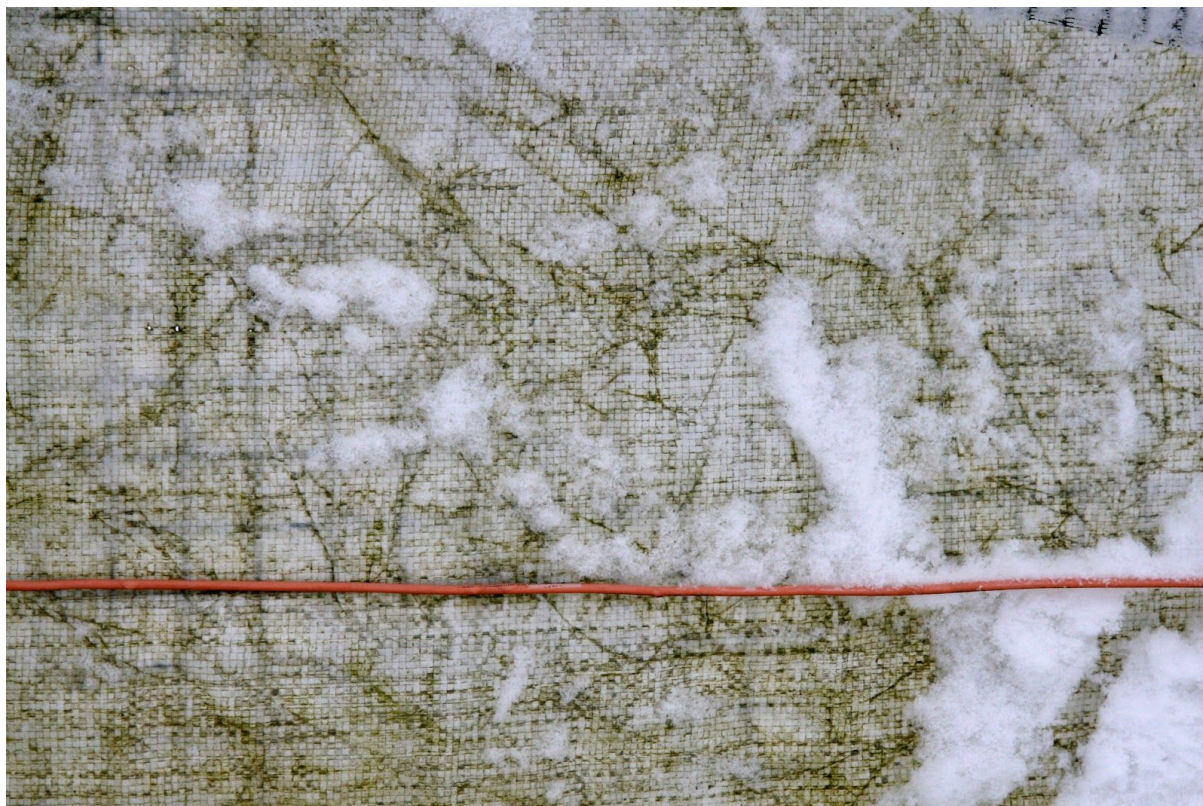
Her skin..., and her tail.

Both of these images reference textiles; folds of cloth and hanks of thread. I subsequently made a piece from these sources, called 'Hide', here's a detail:



Her Quiet Materials

The next image was taken in February 2009 - the year it really did snow in south-east England. It's an old plastic sack, in itself a form of synthetic cloth. The algae build-up could be thread and the red plastic cord could be couched. All could be translated into an artwork, but I've yet to do it.



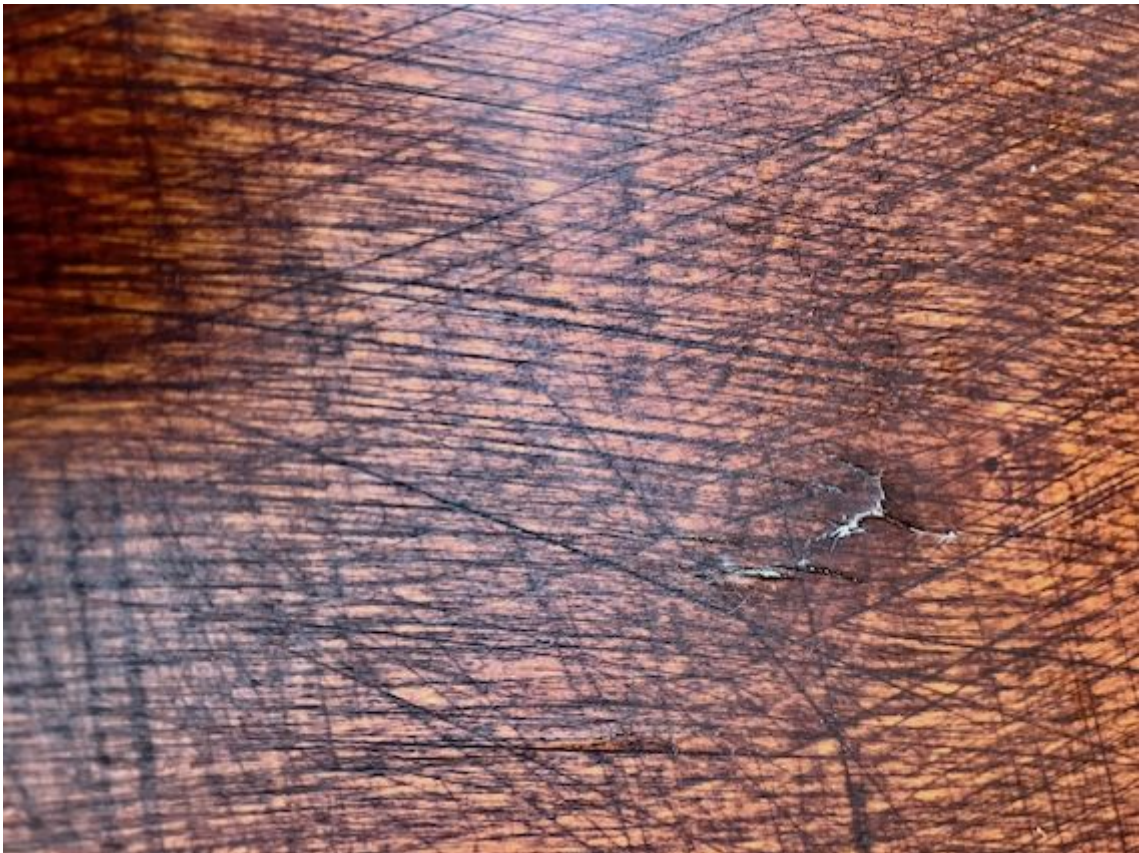
Plastic sack with red piping

Anyone interested in stitch will usually be drawn to lines and rows. Using fine thread offers us the opportunity to reference filigree, tendrils, netting, webs, cracks and erosion marks. Heavier threads can be couched to create fissures, tracks, contour lines and ridges. The next two images reference lines; the first from the City of Arts & Sciences in Valencia where I was amused by the combination of cycle tracks and footprints. The second on a battered and scored piece of wood in a boatyard in Croatia.

Her Quiet Materials



Cycle tracks and footprints on water-covered concrete.



Scored wood at a boatyard.

Her Quiet Materials

Sometimes it's all about colour rather than line, form or texture - whether or not I'll ever reference these colours in an artwork remains to be seen, but I still love the punch they offer.



A rather lovely complementary colour scheme, off-set against the neutral of grey.

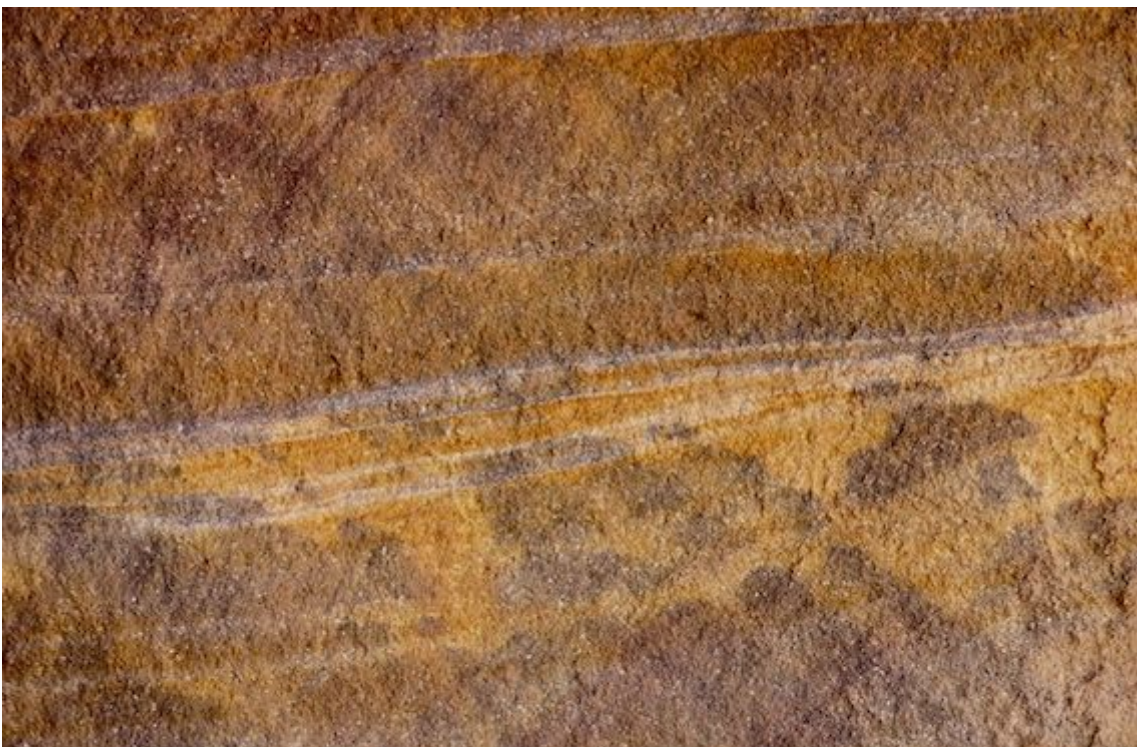


Fire and ice in northern Norway.

Her Quiet Materials



Palettes at the railroad yard in Marfa, Texas.



Sandstone in Petra, Jordan.

Her Quiet Materials

Many of us are attracted to the visual beauty of decay and I'm no exception; cracked and peeling paint, crumbling brick, rusted metal and scored wood all have huge appeal on many levels. A camping holiday in France offered many opportunities to gaze at old buildings, most with fascinating doors that I became somewhat obsessed with.



I used the top right image for a paper lamination piece called 'Secrets'.

Her Quiet Materials

I've visited Allanbank Mill Steading (home of Pauline Burbidge and Charles Poulsen) twice now and have been repeatedly drawn to one of Charlie's sculptures that could reference lichen, moss, creeping thyme, worm casts, bouclé yarn, boiled wool or French knots! It's made from strips of lead folded into bundles, bound with another strip of lead and 'planted' along with a tree branch wrapped in lead.



Detail of lead sculpture by Charles Poulsen, Allanbank Mill Steading

I loved it so much I tried to commission Charlie to make another at the barn but understandably, he doesn't like to 'repeat'. One day I might have a go myself as the materials and process do have an affinity with handling thread and cloth.

And next comes a water butt, made (I presume) from an old whiskey barrel. It reminds me of the work of Hilary Bower, who's often used metal in her textile pieces.



Having started in monochrome I seem to be finishing in the same way (no real surprise!) with a pile of weathered anchor chain.., which could be translated through layers of chain stitch (see below).

Photography is a wonderful thing, but I do think it's important not to become a slave to the camera. It's all too easy to get distracted by what might make a good picture as opposed to spending the time simply looking and enjoying the experience. I've also started to be very ruthless with my image library; culling and sorting and often printing the images that truly, truly resonate. I keep them filed under key headings such as 'texture', 'lines & rows', 'colour', 'stitch possibility' and so forth. Printing my images means that I can select, extract and pin several up at once. I find this more useful than having to turn a page or flick across screens as it means I can start to build relationships and consider how different elements could work together in an artwork.



Weathered anchor chain at the marina in Croatia.

The colours in this anchor chain are a reflection of the sky outside my window as I write; full of scudding clouds in many hues of grey. Summer is definitely slipping away; the days are shortening and there's a chill in the air of a morning and evening. But the bonus of the coming autumn and winter are the brilliance of the sunsets here at the barn, hearing the geese honking as they gather to fly south, seeing the trees change colour, drop their leaves and reveal their structure. Not to mention getting my woolens out, making casseroles with dumplings (!) and focusing on hand stitch. I have four works-in-progress waiting for thread and am looking forward to getting back to stitch after a fairly intensive period of wet work.

Have a serene and happy Autumn.