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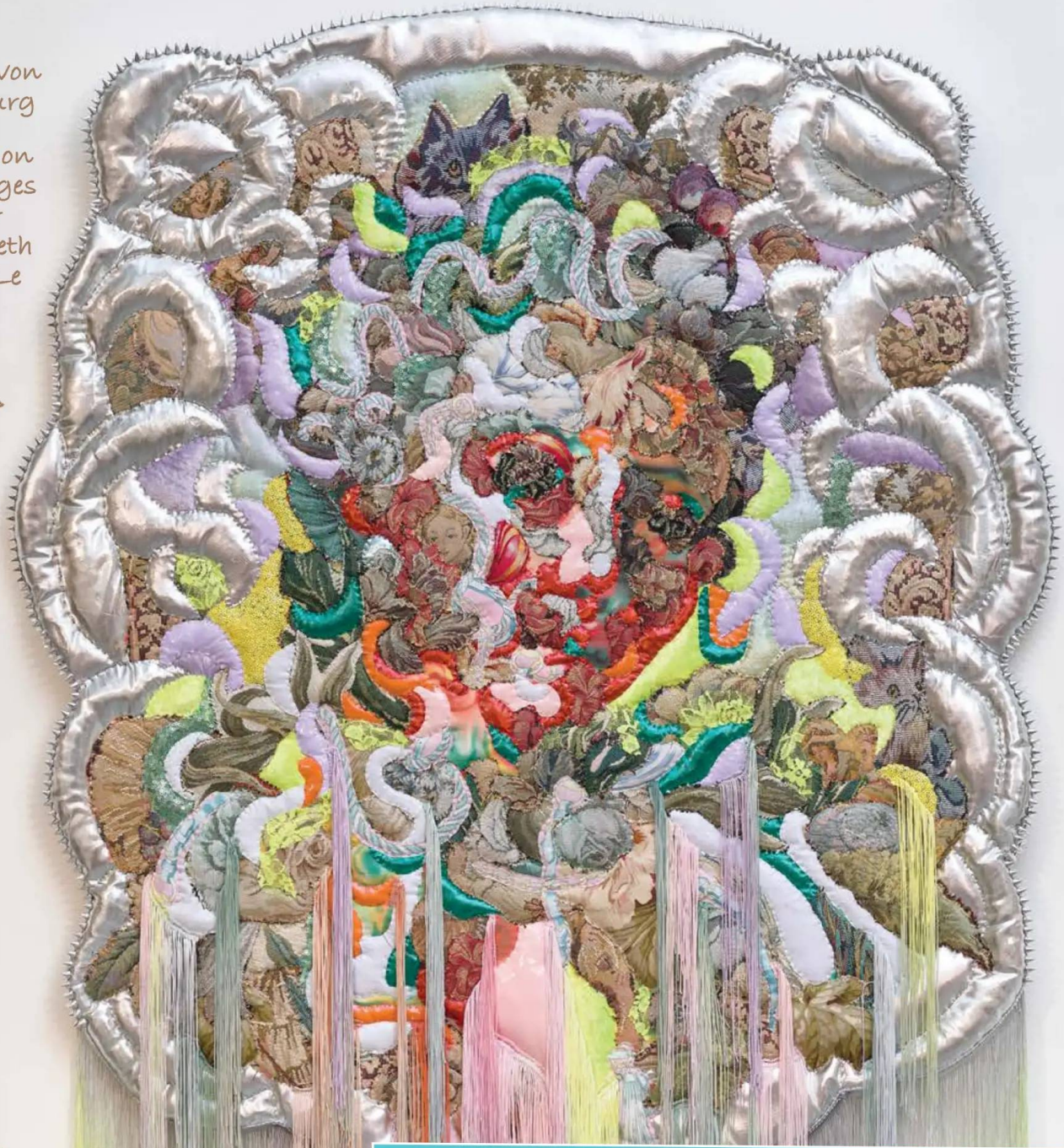
THE 100% AUSTRALIAN-OWNED TEXTILE ART MAGAZINE

TEXTILE FIBRE FORUM

ARTIST PROFILES * FEATURES * REVIEWS * EXHIBITIONS

Anne Von Freyburg

Sharp on the Edges _ After Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun



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Anne von Freyburg

THE MEDIUM IS THE MEANING



Despite starting out in fashion design, London-based Dutch artist Anne von Freyburg's calling was always visual art. Following that dream has paid off: the artist has had a very busy 2025, with both a solo and group exhibition at Saatchi Gallery London, and soon making the return to the Tapestry Triennial at the Centrale Textile Museum in Łódź for its 18th iteration.

For some artists, their medium is, well, a means to an end. For Anne von Freyburg though, it's always been all about the textiles, and the historical prejudice against them has never sat quite right. In fact, curiosity as to the origin of the fine art/textile divide was her motivation to move across from fashion design and undertake a Master of Fine Art at Goldsmiths University in London, from which she graduated in 2016. It remains why she makes her (theoretical, if not literal) "paintings" - which is to say, her painterly textile recreations of celebrated master works where the medium is the meaning. That meaning is in turn conferred upon with the deliberate parallel significance of her Rococo references; that which has been historically devalued as feminine frivolity finds a fierce defender in von Freyburg. "By bringing textiles and fine art together I want to challenge the underlying, persevering, hierarchical system," she offers, referring to the historical conception that painting sits at the apex of art forms, and history painting above all other genres. "Choosing the Rococo period as my reference and turning them into embellished and kitschy materials is to lay on the question of taste – thickly."

▲ *Trickster (after Fragonard, The Toilet of Venus)*, 2022, fabric painting: acrylic, synthetic-fabrics, spray-paint, tapestry-fabric, hand-embroidery, polyester wadding, and hand-dyed tassel fringes on canvas, 115 x 195 cm. Courtesy the artist and HOFA Gallery. Photo: Barry Macdonald

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AUTHOR: Grace Sandles



▲ *Oops I Made You Lose Your Head (After Fragonard, The Swing)*, 2023, textile painting: acrylic ink, synthetic-fabrics, tapestry-fabric, sequin fabrics, hand-embroidery, polyester wadding, hand-dyed tassel fringes on canvas, 250 x 235 cm. (Private Collection). ◀ *Oops I Made You Lose Your Head (After Fragonard, The Swing)*, 2023, *detail*

"My inspiration comes mostly from a reactionary place, something that captures my attention because it's amusing, problematic or embarrassing," the artist tells me. "Ideas can come from pop culture, people on the street, music, art history, fashion, movies, feminist literature or a visit to a gallery. In general, I am interested in how beauty and femininity is constructed through both contemporary visual culture and through art history." von Freyburg begins her creative process by finding original paintings from the Rococo era. As vehicles to talk about identity, taste, fast fashion and gender, to criticise the so-called 'capitalised femininity' that feeds into consumerism and obsession with outer appearance, and in some ways to even self-police her own involvement in those very systems, it's essential the paintings are "right." "Reconstructing old masters' paintings out of various fabrics is my way for painting to have a dialogue with textiles," she adds, so colour, texture and detail are paramount. The next step is to digitally manipulate the colour and surface of the original piece, and translate that into her 'blueprints' for the new work, so to speak. From here, her process really is that of a painter: she sketches a quick underpainting onto raw canvas with acrylic ink, and builds up from there - only for her, it is synthetic-fabrics, PVC fabric, tapestry-fabric, sequin fabrics, hand-embroidery, polyester wadding and tassels instead of paint.

Included in her exhibition *Papillotage* at HOFA Gallery London in 2024, *Oops I Made You Lose Your Head (After Fragonard, The Swing)* (2023) epitomises what she means by the "right" Rococo painting. One of, if not *the*, most iconic paintings from the artistic movement which spanned roughly 1730-80, Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *The Swing* (1767-68) depicts, primarily, a young man lounging in a clearing, his young mistress on a swing with her skirts flouncing out – watch where his gaze points: *this is Rococo*. Her shoe has come off her pointed foot, and is whizzing through the air. It is this movement, a young woman - and her shoe - in flight, that Anne von Freyburg has rendered in loopy, curvy segments of coloured fabric, sewn together intricately in a nod to the conchophilia that is categorically Rococo. On some, when you look closely, you can see words like 'Pow' and 'Wow.' She did say detail was important.

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▲ *Electric Feel (After Fragonard, The Pursuit)*, 2025, textile painting: acrylic ink, synthetic fabrics, PVC fabric, tapestry-fabric, sequin fabrics, hand-embroidery, polyester wadding and hand-dyed tassel fringes on canvas, 350.52 x 269.24 cm. (Courtesy of the artist & K Contemporary). Photo: Pasquale Viglione. ▼ *Electric Feel (After Fragonard, The Pursuit)*, 2025, *detail*. Photo: Pasquale Viglione



"[IT] GAVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A LARGE-SCALE TEXTILE INSTALLATION. SCALING UP MY WORK BROUGHT CHALLENGES BUT ALSO A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AND APPROACHING MY WORK, NOW THE HAND PAINTED FRINGES ARE BECOMING MORE PROMINENT."

In 2021, von Freyburg won the Robert Walters UK New Artist Award and two years later, in 2023, had her first solo show in London at HOFA Gallery and début show at K contemporary in Denver. She's been on the rise since then, working steadily and exhibiting consistently. Earlier this year, Saatchi Gallery London hosted her solo exhibition *Filthy Cute* (28 March-11 May, 2025). Of the experience, she comments, "[it] gave me the opportunity to make a large-scale textile installation. Scaling up my work brought challenges but also a new way of looking and approaching my work, now the hand painted fringes are becoming more prominent. The fringes mimic paint drips that I paint by hand and add as the last element to the finished piece." The show included such works as *Electric Feel (After Fragonard, The Pursuit)* (2025). Where many of her other recreations of works mimic movement more so than figure, in this piece you can pick out the subjects. See the central woman and child, the cherub statue in black and purple up the top, the onlooking man off to the left. The palette is darker than *Oops I Made You Lose Your Head*, blues leaking into purples into reds and pinks.

Immediately following the solo exhibition, von Freyburg was also included in the same gallery's restaging of the acclaimed nine-room show *FLOWERS - Flora in Contemporary Art and Culture* (30 May-31 August, 2025). Her work joined fashion and textile pieces by Dame Mary Quant (1930-2023), Finnish design house Marimekko, Daniel Roseberry for Schiaparelli, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg,

AUTHOR: Grace Sandles



▲ *Floral arrangement 1 (After Jan van Huysum, Still-life)*, 2024, textile painting: acrylic ink, synthetic-fabrics, PVC fabric, tapestry-fabric, sequin fabrics, hand-embroidery, polyester wadding and hand-dyed tassel fringes on canvas, 229.87 x 254 cm. Finalist, 18th Textile Tapestry Triennial, Łódź, Poland. Photo: Pasquale Viglione.
▼ *Floral arrangement 1 (After Jan van Huysum, Still-life)*, 2024, *detail*. Photo: Pasquale Viglione



Sorcha O'Raghallaigh, Dame Vivienne Westwood (1941-2022), and Stephanie Comilang. *Floral arrangement 1 (After Jan van Huysum, Still-life)* (2024), like some of the works in *Filthy Cute*, were inspired not by the masters of Rococo, but those of the Dutch still life painters.

Following *FLOWERS, Floral arrangement 1 (After Jan van Huysum, Still-life)* travelled to Łódź in Poland for the 18th Textile Tapestry Triennial, curated by Bukola Oyebode-Westerhuis and Marta Kowalewska on the theme of "Deconstruction/Reconstruction". The artist participated in the previous Triennial (2022) on the theme of "Entangled State", also curated by Kowalewska.

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▲ *Hot Stuff (After Boucher, reclining nude)*, 2023, textile painting: acrylic ink, spray-paint, synthetic-fabrics, tapestry-fabric, sequin fabrics, hand-embroidery, polyester wadding, hand-dyed tassel fringes on canvas, 185 x 218 cm. Courtesy the artist and HOFA Gallery. ▼ *Hot Stuff (After Boucher, reclining nude)*, 2023, *detail*





▲ Anne von Freyburg in front of *Electric Feel (After Fragonard, The Pursuit)* at Saatchi Gallery London, 2025. Photo: Pasquale Viglione.

"THROUGH MY WORK I WANT TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY, BODY POSITIVITY, GENDER FLUIDITY, EQUITY AND THE FREEDOM TO BE WHOEVER YOU WANT TO BE. I HOPE THE WORK BRINGS JOY AND A FEELING OF EMPOWERMENT TO BE YOUR WEIRD SELF AND GIVES ENOUGH ROOM FOR THE VIEWER'S OWN INTERPRETATION, IDEAS AND VIEWS."

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▲ *Kabloom (After Jan van Huysum, Flower Still-Life)*, 2024, textile painting: acrylic ink, synthetic fabrics, PVC fabric, tapestry-fabric, sequin fabrics, hand-embroidery, polyester wadding, hand-dyed tassel fringes on canvas, 230 x 130 cm. Collection, Harn Museum of Art, Florida.
▼ *Kabloom (After Jan van Huysum, Flower Still-Life)*, 2024, *detail*. Photos: Pasquale Viglione





▲ *Ladidadida (After Boucher, Venus with Doves)*, 2023, textile painting: acrylic ink, spray-paint, synthetic-fabrics, tapestry-fabric, sequin fabrics, hand-embroidery, polyester wadding and hand-dyed tassel fringes on canvas, 125 x 230 cm. (Private Collection). ▼ *Ladidadida (After Boucher, Venus with Doves)*, 2023, *detail*



◀ *Sunny Side Up (After Fragonard, The Lover Crowned)*, 2025, textile painting: acrylic ink, synthetic-fabrics, PVC fabric, tapestry-fabric, sequin fabrics, hand-embroidery, polyester wadding and hand-dyed tassel fringes on canvas, 223.01 x 279.40 x 2.54 cm. (Courtesy of the artist & K Contemporary). Photo: Pasquale Viglione



▲ *Sunny Side Up (After Fragonard, The Lover Crowned)*, 2025, *detail*. (Courtesy of the artist & K Contemporary). Photo: Pasquale Viglione

It's a fitting end to another year of successes for the artist, whose art "questions, reclaims, celebrates, owns and subverts the clichés of femininity." As von Freyburg asserts, "Through my work I want to support diversity, body positivity, gender fluidity, equity and the freedom to be whoever you want to be. I hope the work brings joy and a feeling of empowerment to be your weird self and gives enough room for the viewer's own interpretation, ideas and views."

Grace Sandles

The 18th International Triennial of Textile (to 3 May, 2026). Central Museum of Textiles in Łódź (Centralne Muzeum Włókiennictwa w Łodzi), 282 Piotrkowska Street, 93-034 Łódź, Poland: ***https://cmwl.pl***

All works Courtesy the artist:
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@annevonfreyburg

Anne von Freyburg is represented by:
HOFA Gallery, London, UK: ***thehouseoffineart.com***
K Contemporary, Denver, USA: ***kcontemporaryart.com***
Rademakers Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands: ***rademakersgallery.com***

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