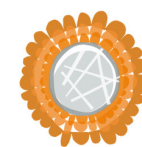




Pictures: Ella Ruth Cowperthwaite



GETTING CREATIVE



*My Shrewsbury Arts columnist **Hannah Day** speaks to textile artist **Rosie Taylor** and introduces us to a whole new world of knitted abstracts*

Long before I illustrated, I worked with textiles and so the chance to talk to contemporary artist Rosie Taylor, was something I have wanted to do for some time.

You may have seen her pieces recently in Mrs Jones Art Shop & Gallery, but if you are not familiar with her work, then let me introduce you.

Knitted abstract compositions, which mix hot shades with warm neutrals, make for textiles that subvert the tradition and leave you feeling uplifted.

We spoke after a long day for both of us and with the cold nights drawing in, the integral warmth that textiles offer felt timely.

Originally from Church Stretton, Rosie studied fashion knitwear design and knitted textile at Nottingham Trent University.

From there she found work in Hong Kong, with a spinning company, seeing firsthand how yarns are developed and made.

But Covid and the offer to work remotely meant she found herself living in Shrewsbury.

After several years of urban high rises, poor air quality and a lack of greenery, she found the town allowed her to reconnect with nature, inspiring her with its peace and quiet.

Rosie's work is based on emotional mapping. Different colours represent different life experiences, although Rosie won't say what each means to her, instead inviting the viewer to decide and interpret the work; colour can have personal and cultural meanings that allow her pieces to be read in various ways.

Rather than reading like tapestries of struggle, they are joyful celebrations of life. As Rosie puts it: 'without the negatives, we don't get pushed to the positives'.

We talked about our town – how it is compact in nature, and full of thriving small business – and of the importance of supporting other people's creative ventures, rattling off a list of people in the town we are supported by, and how we both aim to do the same; purchasing local and small is important – it's what keeps these diverse concerns going.

This led on to Rosie's other key focus, sustainability. Having seen the



environmental impact of the fashion industry, she says, material selection is deeply important.

With her mesh bases made from recycled lined (taken from dead stock), and her cotton yarns GOTS certified (Global Organic Textile Standard) made using metal-free dyes, she is able to source materials that echo her green commitments.

And so to process, which Rosie described as 'quite mathematical'. Once an idea is sketched out, she must work out the rows and stitch numbers for each element.

Her pieces are more heavily planned than might be at first guessed.

Despite that, it is not a rigid process, with works evolving as they are made.

Planning and sampling in this way, perhaps paradoxically, allows her to produce works which are completely freestyled. Knowing the themes of colour, texture, composition, yarn and concept allows her to create as she goes.

It's this consideration of how all the elements of her pieces interact that I particularly love. The boldness of a pink, nestled next to a cream or deep black, is a choice that emphasises each of the selected tones.

She also plays with the heaviness of her yarn next to areas of emptiness, again

contrasting the thinness of the base mesh against the volume of the added thread. This is work that sits on assured ground, understanding contrasts and visual relationships.

Before Rosie starts her pieces, she might spend a couple of months developing swatches, exploring different techniques, such as foil printing (which she ultimately rejected) and experimenting with different fibre types.

The development stage is always longer than you would think, and is a huge part of the creative process that is underappreciated.

By its nature, it is rarely seen, but without the experiments, miss-starts, rejected avenues and refined experiments, the pieces themselves would not exist.

This level of underpinning affords Rosie's pieces gravitas. It's what makes them stand as artworks, worthy of pride of place on walls across the UK.

● Rosie Taylor can be found on Instagram @rosieataylor, or via her website rosieataylor.co.uk, or currently on the walls of GlouGlou.

● Hannah lives and works in Shrewsbury and can be found on Instagram, Facebook, Etsy and Not on the High Street. Just search for Hannah Day UK.