

THE RED DRESS

A 12-year, award winning global, collaborative embroidery project 2009 to 2021

The **Red Dress Project**, conceived by British artist Kirstie Macleod, provides an artistic platform for women around the world, many of whom are marginalized and live in poverty, to tell their personal stories through embroidery.

During 12 years, from 2009 to 2021, pieces of the *Red Dress* have travelled the globe being continuously embroidered onto. Constructed out of 73 pieces of burgundy silk dupion, the garment has been worked on by 239 women and 5 men, from 28 countries, with all 136 commissioned artisans paid for their work. The rest of the embroidery was added by 108 willing participants /audience at various groups/exhibitions/events.

Embroiderers include women refugees from Palestine; victims of war in Kosovo, Rwanda, and DR Congo; impoverished women in South Africa, Mexico, and Egypt; women in Kenya, Japan, Paris, Sweden, Peru, Czech Republic, Dubai, Afghanistan, Australia, Argentina, Switzerland, Canada, Tobago, USA, Russia, Pakistan, Wales, Colombia, and the UK, as well as upmarket embroidery studios in India and Saudi Arabia.

Many of the artisans are established embroiderers, but there are also many pieces created by first time embroiderers. The artisans were encouraged to tell a personal story they would like to share, expressing their own identities and adding their own cultural and traditional experience.

Initially the project sought to generate a dialogue of identity through embroidery, merging diverse cultures, with no borders. Over the 12 years however, through the individual stories of the women involved, the dress has come to be a platform for self-expression, an opportunity for the women to have a voice to tell their personal stories.

The *Red Dress's* 12-year creation journey around the world is now completed, with the dress assembled in its final configuration. Covered in millions of stitches, the 6.2 kg. silk *Red Dress* is weighted as much by the individual stories and collective voices waiting to be heard as by the threads and beads that adorn it.

The *Red Dress* has been exhibited in various galleries and museums worldwide, including Gallery Maeght in Paris, Art Dubai, Museo Des Arte Popular in Mexico City, the National Library of Kosovo, an event at the Royal Academy in London, and the Premio Valcellina Textiles award in Maniago, Italy where it won first prize in 2015. Moving forward, as well as developing a strong online platform the *Red Dress* will be travelling to many different galleries, museums, and event spaces around the world - with a continued aim to be accessible to all. Kirstie hopes to bring the garment to visit the countries of the artisans who helped create her, and exhibit the *Red Dress* alongside their own work in their chosen venue.

Practical and logistical support with commissions for the project was provided by the following charities, self-help development projects, social enterprises and various initiatives providing support to women in poverty: Manchester Aid for Kosovo supporting Sister Stitch in Kosovo; Kisany in Rwanda and DR Congo; Missibaba in South Africa; Kitzen in Mexico; Al Badia in Palestine; and FanSina in Egypt. Seed investment for the project was provided by the British Council Dubai in 2009.

Instagram: www.instagram.com/thereddress_embroidery

Facebook: www.facebook.com/thereddressembroidery

Website: www.reddressembroidery.com