My passion lies with feltmaking and hand stitching, influenced by archaeology and the non-urban environment. Felt making and hand stitching has been a major part of my work since 1997. During that time archaeological digs in Ireland (Downpatrick and Cloughly in County Down and Tullamore in County Offaly) have been the main inspiration for my work. Not only could I take part in the digs, but I was able to document stages. During the dig in County Offaly I was fascinated to be present at the discovery of part of a bog body dated around 500AD. Each layer of earth removed told us something new about the generations of people who had lived, worked and died there. Using this as inspiration, layers of felt pockets were placed in certain areas of the felt textile art pieces to encourage the viewer to look more closely for hidden secrets, in the same way that Archaeologists search the earth for elements of the past. The structure of this work evolves from an attempt to portray to the viewer the beauty and mystery of the Irish bog landscape. Within the felting process I used various hairs such as llama, horse, human and various fibres including sheep wool which was carded together before making the felt. Stitching was added

Bottom 2 images courtesy of Craft NI. Photography: David Pauley-The Studio, 2009
to illustrate detail. I feel felt is the most appropriate textile to use as it relates so strongly to archaeology, in that it has been used throughout history.

My current work derives from my visit to the Burren region of County Clare, Ireland. I was awarded an artist in residence at The Burren College of Art in August 2006, where I spent time documenting details of the Burren landscape and flora through photography and drawings. In 2008 I revisited this research to develop and present new works for an exhibition in Northern Ireland. I designed each piece of work to fit and link the wall spaces of the gallery, which took the viewer on a 360° journey. With this new work I introduced screen printed elements which were further embellished with seed stitch. I printed and stitched onto high quality manufactured woollen felt for its smooth surface. Some of Europe’s most varied flora grows in amongst the rock formations or shifts in the Burren planes. While the shadows and shape of the negative spaces created in the limestone is the focus of the works, abstract splashes of coloured stitching makes references to small wildflowers and plant life. In this current work I still continue to make references to archaeology by adding small squares of thread on some of the pieces.

Living and working in a different environment inspires my work. Recent artist-in-residence locations have included The Australian National University, Canberra; Centrum Arts, Port Townsend, Washington; The Central Finland Arts and Crafts Institute, Petajvesi, Finland. The work I created during these residencies are very different from each other in colour, texture and scale and they could not have been made without the influences of their landscapes.

I am currently a Lecturer in Fine and Applied Arts, Textile Art at the University of Ulster, Belfast, Northern Ireland. I am very much looking forward to revisiting Australia to teach at Geelong FORUM in 2011.