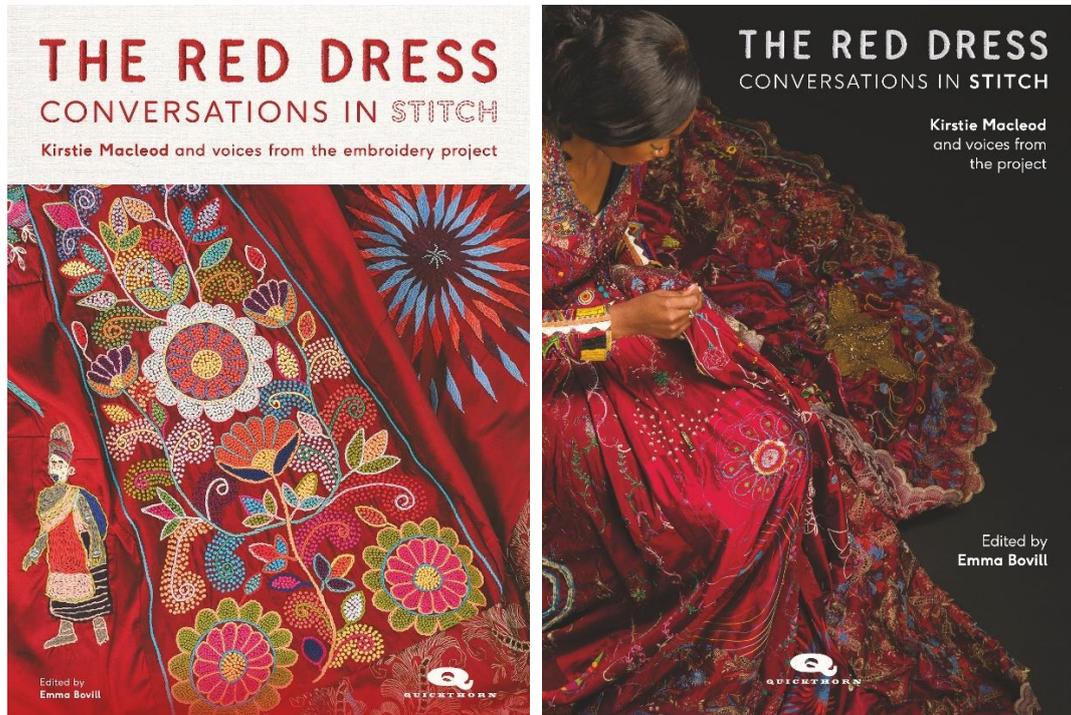


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Red Dress: Conversations in Stitch

The much-anticipated book bringing together voices from The Red Dress global collaborative embroidery project created by British artist Kirstie Macleod is to be published by Quickthorn Books UK.



The Red Dress: Conversations in Stitch celebrates the award-winning project conceived by artist Kirstie Macleod and created by 380 individuals in 51 countries over 14 years from 2009–2023. The Red Dress weaves together the diverse stories of its contributors across borders and boundaries uniting artisans and audiences in the shared community of embroidery. Composed of 87 panels of burgundy silk dupion (approx. 25m of fabric) embellished with an estimated 1-1.5 billion stitches using a wide variety of traditional techniques, the dress was added to by 141 commissioned artisans and 239 willing embroiderers at exhibitions and events.

Since its completion, The Red Dress has travelled to major cultural and educational venues and festivals worldwide, including galleries, museums, heritage institutions and creative centres, as well as to political gatherings such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the British Embassy in Cairo. It has ignited discussion, debate, collaboration and creativity including the Calico Garment Initiative (to date there are nine accompanying calico 'sister dresses' and three calico cloaks) and many other projects which have been inspired by the dress and initiated as a result of or alongside its display.

Available in softback, limited-edition hardback and as an e-book, *The Red Dress: Conversations in Stitch* is a sensitive but energetic curation of material from the dress' incredible ongoing journey. It features poignant hand-selected embroiderer stories, thought-provoking and illuminating commissioned essays on themes The Red Dress brings up, such as identity, empowerment and healing trauma, and reflections from milestones in the project. The book explores links with the Royal School of Needlework, the dress' invitation to the PACE Winter Session on Equality and Non-Discrimination in 2023 and its inclusion in the 'Knots that Bind'

exhibition at Hampi Art Labs in India in 2024, nearly two decades after Kirstie’s original travels to the country which sewed the first seeds for the garment.

As creator and custodian of The Red Dress, Kirstie Macleod traces the metamorphosis of the project, which originally saw her wearing and embroidering directly onto the dress from inside a Perspex box, in terms of both design, impact and ambition. She reveals personal insights from her extensive travels with the garment, which will be listed in the *Guinness World Records 2025* as the largest collaborative embroidery project, including details of its creation, reception and continuing exhibition tour. Kirstie also shares the background of and practical instructions for specific embroidery styles featured on the dress.

**FANSINA ARTISANS,
SINAI EGYPT**

EQ#PT 2018



SECTION OF THE DRESS:
Inspired by the bobes populating the mountain sides above St Catherine's, these artisans are supported and empowered through the creation of their delicate floral embroidery.

Embroidery Story

The original inspiration for the dress was an embroidery on the wall of a church in the Sinai desert, Egypt.

The inspiration was further reinforced when I visited the Sinai desert in 2011. I was struck by the intricate and beautiful embroidery on the walls of the churches and the way the women of the region had preserved this ancient art form.

I had the pleasure of meeting some of the women who were working on the dress at the time it was first made.



The dress was made in a workshop in the Sinai desert, Egypt, where the women of the region have been working on it for many years.



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"In total 50 women worked for 1 month on a large section of the skirt measuring 4m x 2m."



‘There are so many special and unique memories to recount from the project, such as four-year old Ukrainian refugee Adele presenting me with her design for The Red Dress at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France, Bedouin Jabaliya women dancing around the completed garment in Egypt’s Sinai desert and mother and daughter Sabina and Ajna Jusić embracing each other while draped in the bodice and skirt of the dress at the ‘Speaking Out’ exhibition at the War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina,’ said Kirstie. ‘Through a combination of text, images and detailed illustrations, the book captures and communicates these moments and many more, amplifying their messages and meaning.’

The project has now achieved (supported by a successful Crowdfunder campaign and donations) its aspiration to produce a book as part of wider activities to document the garment which also include The Red Dress website, interactive Digital Red Dress, existing footage and a further planned film and archiving activities. Published by Quickthorn Books UK, which has also published *On Mending: Stories of damage and repair* by Celia Pym, *Intelligent Hands: Why making is a skill for life* by Charlotte Abrahams and Katy Bevan and *Finding Quiet Strength: Emotional intelligence, embodied awareness* by Judith Kleinman, *The Red Dress: Conversations in Stitch* joins a growing canon of literature highlighting the importance of artistic endeavours in fostering community, resolving conflict and enabling self-expression.

‘I’m delighted to be able to support Kirstie and her project,’ said Katy Bevan, Quickthorn publisher. ‘The first time I saw The Red Dress in real life I was bowled over with how powerful it is. Just to be in the presence of the beautiful, detailed and time-consuming work that gives voice to so many women who have been silenced by society – you can almost hear it singing.’

‘The Red Dress project is a powerful reminder of our shared humanity and the threads that connect us all,’ said Cassidy Zachary, fashion historian, author and podcaster who supported the Crowdfunder for *The Red Dress Conversations in Stitch* on her popular @the_art_of_dress

Instagram platform. 'I am so excited that this book will continue to spread this beautiful testament to the stories quite literally sewn into the clothes we wear.'

'Nothing is a more eloquent example than The Red Dress of the power of embroidery as stitched storytelling, connecting people across borders of every kind,' said Caroline Zoob, founder and editor of *The Stitcher's Journal*. 'It is a meaningful document in fabric of recent human history and an enduring testament to the spirit of friendship and creativity that burns even in the darkest times. The Red Dress speaks for itself on its many travels to different parts of the world, but how wonderful it will be to have access to it at all times on the page through *The Red Dress Conversations in Stitch*.'

The Red Dress: Conversations in Stitch softback book (ISBN 978-1-7393160-8-2) is published by independent publisher Quickthorn Books UK on 21 May 2025 and available to preorder from quickthornbooks.com and good bookshops and online retailers for £25.99 (hardback £45.00 ISBN 978-1-0683215-0-4, e-book £8.99 ISBN 978-1-0683215-1-1).

Further Quotes

'The Red Dress signifies vital and important ways in which stitch and collaborative practices can speak across regional, national and international boundaries, bringing people together both in the joy of stitch, but also in the intimacy of what it means to be a global community,' said Catherine Dormor, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Professor of Textile Practices and Feminisms at the University of Westminster and author of *A Philosophy of Textile: Between Practice and Theory* who has written the Foreword for *The Red Dress: Conversations in Stitch*. 'From the first time I encountered Kirstie's work I was spellbound by its ambition and commitment to reaching out to such a range of people and contexts. The dress is a vibrant reminder of what can be achieved with such vision and tenacity. That the dress is red, a signal of passion, love and adventure, alongside acting as a warning, an arrest and fire, speaks into the heart of the project, drawing attention to its creators and its travels.'

'What a magnificent symbol of how art can represent the power and spirit of women all over the world and transform their work, their imagination and their hope into a thing of beauty,' said Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo, Vice-President of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, at the Council of Europe in 2023 (further detailed in the book). 'Congratulations to Kirstie Macleod for having conceived this project, for having travelled all over the world to give women in towns, villages, cities, and in the country, the opportunity to express themselves individually and collectively on The Red Dress. Now we can read this dress as if it was a book, telling the personal stories of each embroiderer.' [Extract from *The Red Dress: Conversations in Stitch*, transcript of Council of Europe speech given by Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo]

'Kirstie Macleod should be the recipient of a special international award for her unwavering resolve to draw the world's attention to the many marginalized artisan communities around the world in dire need of respect and help,' says Nana Wagner, curator at iThemba CraftArt Gallery in Stellenbosch, South Africa, where the dress travelled in July 2024, revisiting the community of one of its earliest contributors (included in the book). 'Their voices deserve to be heard, their creativity to be appreciated, their hopes for a better life strengthened and a viable future for them and their families made possible, their dignity and self-worth restored. May the beauty of The Red Dress and Kirstie Macleod's extraordinary project be seen as a beacon of hope and give a voice to the voiceless.' [Extract from *The Red Dress: Conversations in Stitch*, commissioned essay by Nana Wagner]

About Kirstie Macleod

Kirstie Macleod is an artist exploring issues of identity, the subconscious and the passage of time through colour and repetitive mark making. With a background in fine art, textiles and costume, her practice began in creating large scale installations often involving garments alongside photography, film, embroidery and painting. During 2015–2023 she worked full time on The Red Dress project.

Useful Links

<https://reddressembroidery.com/>

<https://reddressembroidery.com/EXHIBITIONS>

Projects inspired by The Red Dress (including the Calico Garment Initiative)

<https://reddressembroidery.com/INSPIRED-BY-THE-RED-DRESS>

Digital Red Dress created by students on Bath Spa University's Creative Computing course

<https://reddressembroidery.com/DIGITAL-RED-DRESS>

Videos about The Red Dress project <https://reddressembroidery.com/MEDIA>

@thereddress_embroidery

<https://www.kirstiemacleod.co.uk/>

@kirstiemacleod

For more information, photos or for additional quotes from Kirstie Macleod please contact Emma Bovill: 07871 947122 | info@saltbaked.co.uk | @besaltbaked.