



Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester



Annual Review 2021-22



The RSN Stitch Bank launched the RSN 150th Anniversary



Mission

Over the years RSN activities have taken many forms but our mission has endured: to ensure the future of hand embroidery through teaching, practising and promoting the art and techniques of hand embroidery to all those who want to learn.

Values

Tradition, Quality and Innovation

Featured on the cover:

RSN Stitch Bank

The Royal School of Needlework launched its Anniversary year with the opening of the RSN Stitch Bank. This digital resource aims to feature every stitch in the world, show how it is worked and how it has been used in the UK and internationally. The RSN Stitch Bank was made possible by the kind donations from charitable trusts and from individuals who adopted a stitch, often in memory of someone or as a gift to a friend. The launch began with 150 stitches and since then 25 more have been added every quarter resulting in now more than 250 stitches. During 2022-23 we hope to extend the reach of the project to be able to include stitches from other countries. The RSN Stitch Bank is a significant RSN legacy project and has been welcomed by stitchers and embroidery groups all over the world.

<https://www.RSNstitchbank.org>

Impact reporting

In this annual review, for the first time, we have specifically included some reference to the impact of our work on beneficiaries using comments from those who attended classes or events. We recognise the positive impact participating in RSN events can have and we are constantly looking to help our students and customers leverage these benefits.

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Susan Aldworth

Jamie Mr X Stitch Chalmers

Sarah Mower

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Dev Patel

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Chair of Trustees' Introduction

In 2022 we celebrated over 150 years of the Royal School of Needlework and there was no better tribute to the incredible achievements of many individuals over the years than our 150th Anniversary exhibition, *150 Years of the Royal School of Needlework: Crown to Catwalk* which ran for five months at the Fashion and Textile Museum in London.

This unique exhibition explored the RSN's contribution to the world of embroidery and our remarkable history. From collaborations with the Arts and Crafts movement and commissions for the British royal family, to contemporary works for top, international designers, and pieces by our own talented students, it featured pieces from our own extensive archive, as well as museums and collections from across the UK. Thank you to everyone who contributed to making this possible for the thousands of visitors that attended.

For our Council of trustees 2022 was also a time to reflect on the last couple of years in particular. While many similar organisations suspended activities during the bulk of 2020 and 2021 due to the global pandemic, the RSN kept going and our own operations had to undergo enormous change. We are very grateful to our dedicated and hardworking team of staff who responded to the challenge and made this possible.

However, the broader societal impacts of Covid are still to be fully understood and the external environment continues to adapt to numerous factors such as changing work patterns, the re-emerging popularity of many arts and crafts and an increasing appreciation of factors impacting mental health and wellbeing. Our own switch to online classes and activities attracted many new customers to the RSN who had previously been unable to join us face-to-face. We must take the best of that experience for those who prefer to stitch in their own home or who are unable to travel to us and combine it with our operation at Hampton Court Palace and other venues throughout the UK and beyond.

We undertook a listening exercise in Spring 2022 to better understand the experiences and views of a variety of stakeholder groups as we all emerged from the restrictions of the pandemic. On behalf of the trustees, I personally spoke to a number of individuals which was invaluable preparation in taking on the Chair of Trustee role at the beginning of September 2022. This exercise provided a rich pool of data and insights for us to consider our role going forward and how we best deliver that. As a result we have implemented a number of actions such as strengthening the staff team with additional resource and embarked on a series of reviews to underpin the foundations of our operation and delivery and improve our proposition for stakeholders.

In particular the exercise has led to a key piece of work entitled 'What If?'. The aim of this is to review our broader vision and values and our role in the wider community to ensure we are relevant and inspiring in the context of 2022 and beyond. The RSN is unique; no other single organisation covers the breadth of education, practice and promotional activity we undertake, or has our connections, collection, archive and heritage. In 1872, it was founded on two key principles: the preservation of hand embroidery as an art form and the support of

women's independence through work. In the intervening 150 years, these goals have taken many different forms and at time of writing our 'What If?' review is posing some very interesting questions for us to consider. We have involved a broad range of stakeholders and look forward to analysing the findings in more detail and progressing the project as appropriate.

I took over as Chair of Trustees last September and look forward to helping the RSN navigate this journey with our Council of Trustees. We thank Andrew Palmer for his chairmanship over the past six years and also the five trustees whose terms came to an end during the year or for whom the demands of their own professional and personal circumstances meant they had to leave mid-term; Morgan Fowles, Elizabeth Braakenburg Dyce, Deborah Lamb, Reena Pastakia and Miranda Corti.

Our trustee team now spans a good range of tenures, and we welcomed three new trustees in Claire Miller, Julie Richards, and Louisa Christofidou just before the year end whose individual skills and experience strengthen our Council further. In addition, we have reviewed our committee structure to improve our governance further and will be recruiting more trustees in 2023.

Our strategic plans going forward involve ensuring we emerge from the pandemic stronger and more focused on the areas where we have specific skills and expertise and can make most difference. We are never short of ideas, but we must make sure we have solid foundations and the resources needed to achieve all that we want.

Pip Wood

Chair of Trustees



Degree final project work by Linnea Lyndon

Public Benefit

The values of the RSN are Quality, Tradition and Innovation all of which have been demonstrated throughout the year through teaching, the practise of Stitch in the RSN Studio and promotion. In addition, these values were particularly shown as part of our 150th anniversary in 2022 when we took the opportunity to expand our public benefit. Much of our work has been outward facing and we have been able to meet people and provide more in-person opportunities to offer maximum public benefit this year such as attendance at shows, exhibitions and lectures as well as some significant new developments. The highlights are:

New Developments

The launch of the RSN Stitch Bank initially with 150 stitches and now totalling 225. We believe this is the biggest repository of its kind and it is openly accessible to all stitchers worldwide. This has been exceptionally well received by stitchers in many countries.

Exhibitions and Displays

Our major event of the year was the exhibition at the Fashion and Textile Museum: *150 years of the RSN Crown to Catwalk*. The exhibition had some 150 objects and part of its success was the generosity with which people loaned the articles. The Museum commented that this exhibition had more lenders than any other exhibition they have held. With support from the Worshipful Company of Broderers we held events during the exhibition for Families (with several generations stitching) and for schools which quickly sold out and we tried to arrange additional dates. Degree students and Future Tutors were among those who helped to lead the classes along with RSN volunteers. And on open stitch days virtually every visitor to the exhibition came and had a go. Over 12,000 people visited the exhibition and now many of the objects featured can be seen on the RSN website.

Ely Cathedral exhibition, held over from 2021 featured all 12 Litany of Loreto pieces, shown together for the first time since 2013. This was visited by over 5,000 people.

On behalf of our Livery Company supporters we displayed work and work in progress at the Becket Pageant and the Field of Cloth of Gold event at the Painter Stainers' Livery Hall in the City of London.

We loaned two of the Litany series to an exhibition at the Maryan library, University of Dayton, Ohio, USA which was about the designer of the Litany Series, Italian Ezio Anichini.

The RSN opened its first exhibition at Hampton Court Palace since 2019 in July 2022. Entitled *A Girl's Education in Stitch*, it featured work by girls from the 17th century to the mid-20th century including samplers, worked dressmaking models and school books of small samples of stitching on everything from nightwear to knickers and slippers to socks.

The Worshipful Company of Broderers held an exhibition in London in February and had an open call for participants. Over one third of the selected work was by graduates and students of the RSN. The Gallery reported that it had been one of their most visited shows ever.

Attendance at Shows

We attended the Knitting and Stitching shows in London and Harrogate and ran courses in both locations taught by Future Tutors.

We attended the Decorex design exhibition and promoted the RSN's links with the arts and crafts movement of the late 19th and early 20th century featuring curtain designs by Alexander Fisher from the RSN's unique archive.

Other activities

A lecture was given by the Chief Executive about the Litany series as part of the above exhibition and over 600 people signed up from all over the world.

We have continued to offer a lecture programme twice a month. This year, as well as sessions by the Chief Executive and the Contextual Studies Lecturer, Amy Hare, we invited others to participate, featuring the Royal Collection, the Royal Dress Collection, the stitching of Mary Queen of Scots and we also welcomed talks from some of the RSN Ambassadors including Mr X Stitch and artist Susan Aldworth

We have continued to offer talks to groups as requested. The Chief Executive has given many talks to stitch groups, sampler groups, quilters, WIs and other groups in the UK and internationally especially in the US and Canada.

Impact

The impact of all of these events and activities has been to bring the RSN to a wider range of people across the globe, it has broadened the interest and participation of those who have taken part in stitch and made us more accessible to many others. The online events certainly expanded the audience who can benefit from our activities and the accessible-to-all approach of our Family and School days helped make people realise that stitch is a positive activity that can really boost health and wellbeing and needs no prior requirement to be of a certain standard. These kinds of activities will be continued and expanded in our forward plans.

Perhaps the biggest impact has been from the RSN Stitch Bank which is introducing and making the exploration of hand stitching accessible worldwide. This single comment represents hundreds of responses.

Instagram comment on RSN Stitch Bank "Having so much fun exploring the stitches. What a wonderful resource. I'm so excited to use this and watch it grow. Thank you for all your hard work and attention to detail!"

Right Samplers from A Girl's Education in Stitch exhibition



A diversified portfolio

The RSN receives no income from government and so has to earn or raise all its income. As such it has a diverse portfolio of income sources in order to protect itself if any do less well than budgeted. The principal sources of income are taught courses including the Certificate and Diploma in technical hand embroidery, short courses and the Degree programme. We also run the Future Tutor programme through which someone can qualify to teach for the RSN, although this often costs us money which we cover by raising funds for core costs and bursaries. We are also looking at new ways to enhance the portfolio hence our move to online courses, originally enforced by lockdown but now a staple part of the programme, and the development of the International Summer School which began in the US in 2018 but now operates both online in different time zones and onsite. In addition, we have the RSN Studio and our Retail operation which promote our skills and meet the needs of a variety of different customers.

Education is the heart of the RSN, passing on the skills of hand embroidery across more than a dozen techniques to students through a wide range of courses. Students can start on short courses and move on to Certificate and Diploma or head straight for the Future Tutor or Degree programmes.

Short Courses

It was inevitable that as lockdowns lifted and people began to move around more, that they turned to other activities, so we were prepared for a reduction in take up of short courses, but in actual fact this happened less than was anticipated. We were helped by the special

courses, especially Technical Tuesdays which, following the success of the initial launch last year, we expanded by adding a technique, Blackwork, and ran four classes, two of Jacobean stitches and two of Blackwork stitches each for 30 weeks.

The other short course offerings covered a wide range of techniques and were generally available on UK/Europe and American time zones. We also opened up Hampton Court Palace for onsite classes over seven weeks of the summer and while booking was initially slow, they did attract people from USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Japan and Europe. All these strands resulted in income exceeding budget.

Impact

The impact of the Short courses is to give people access to a variety of stitch courses. Through the online offering we can enable more people to access our teaching regardless of location and have also expanded our own teaching capacity as we are not limited by our own on site facilities. As a result, this has increased the average number of classes taken by a student each year. For the students it means more enjoyment and for many that is relaxation and a positive enhancement of mental health and wellbeing. It has also had the effect of encouraging a number of people to move on to the Certificate and Diploma Programme.

"Learning online suits me perfectly as I care for my elderly father. I have found the RSN to be a very professional organisation in delivering the courses and in the back up support offered. I would say to anyone wishing to learn embroidery to take one of the many classes offered on the RSN website."



Above Autumn Blossom by Auburn Lucas, right snow bunting by Becky Hogg and far right 17th century tree by Helen Jones



Certificate and Diploma

Participation in our Certificate and Diploma (C&D) course has been growing back to pre-pandemic levels. All four of our UK regional satellites reopened in 2021-22 although some had greater take up than others. We also returned to North America for the first time since 2019, welcoming 12 students and offered a full eight weeks of Summer Intensives. During the eight weeks we had five students attending all eight weeks and achieving their certificate in the summer,

Also this year, C&D graduates were once again able to hold an exhibition and have a proper presentation ceremony with family on hand to witness.

The online C&D classes have held up well with three starting across the year on each time zone. Teaching Jacobean, Blackwork and Goldwork has proved very effective with students achieving similar marks to students receiving tuition face to face. Silk shading has proved slightly more challenging and the team are working on streamlining the choices and adding key stages to ensure online students understand the steps involved. We now have more groups of Jacobean Crewelwork students wanting to stay together finding the peer support as important as the course. We are on the verge of having the first three students complete the Certificate course all online, a massive achievement in just over two years.

We are now looking to build on participation as we go forward. We are particularly grateful to the Tutors who have embraced online teaching, enabling them to work from home and the RSN to reach a broader audience.

Impact

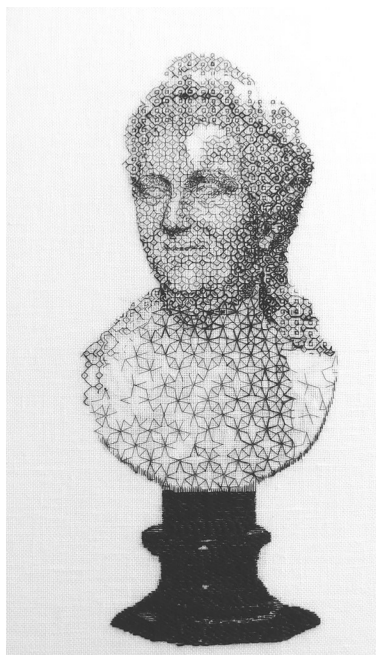
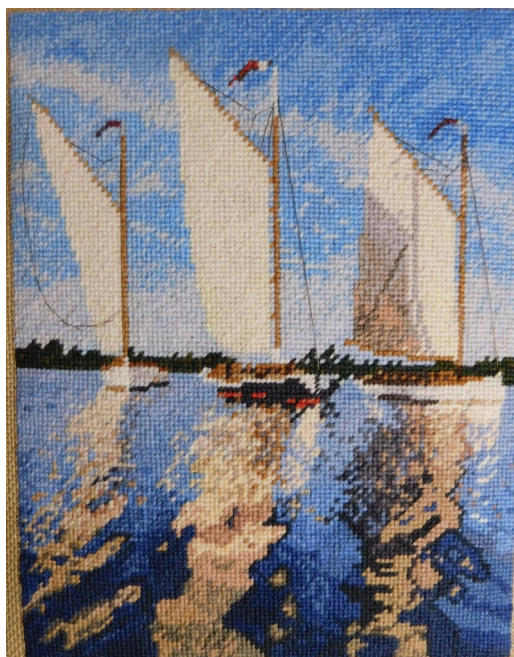
Making the C&D, our flagship programme to many people, available online as well as on site has had a huge impact and brought in many students who have for years wanted to take this course but could not accommodate the travel distance and timing. Now with the online versions it is available wherever people are based.

C&D posts about students work were regularly liked on Instagram with some receiving 2,500 likes. The impact on individuals was often more than just technical learning,

"I attended a Certificate and Diploma open day at Bristol in May 2019 and decided to sign up for the course. I am studying purely for pleasure and find embroidery a great way to relax and unwind. I like the flexibility of studying with the RSN and find the quality of teaching, materials, and range of courses outstanding. I look forward to experimenting with my own ideas in the future, utilising the different skills I am learning with the RSN."

"Hand embroidery has been life changing for me; it improves my mental health, gives me a break from my work at the keyboard and is something I do just for me, no one else (hard to achieve sometimes when you are a working parent!). I have just started planning the first piece for my Diploma and am looking forward to being back at the RSN in September."

"That is absolutely exquisite! I really didn't appreciate canvas embroidery until I started seeing the Certificate student designs and now I'm really inspired by the possibilities of this technique."



Above: left Canvas shading by Jane McConnachie, Rugby; Centre: Blackwork by Anne Tait, Online student, Right: Silk Shading by Elin Gray Bristol

Future Tutors

All technical tuition for our Future Tutor (FT) course returned to onsite in 2021 as lockdown restrictions eased, although the team still used online for art and design as the best use of time.

Meanwhile 2021 FT graduate Kate Pankhurst won London Embroidery House, Hand & Lock's prize for Textile Art with her stunning *Lockdown o'clock* and current and graduate Future Tutors participated extensively in the Worshipful Company of Broderers' exhibition of contemporary embroidery held on Bankside in February 2022. This open exhibition was an excellent introduction to the art form and its many different formats and techniques. One third of the pieces on display had been created by RSN graduates from C&D, Apprenticeship, Future Tutors and Degree. The comments from visitors to the various Future Tutor exhibitions have all been extremely positive, with one gentleman remarking to the Course Leader, "It is wonderful that these traditions are being kept alive and passed on."

We particularly try to introduce live projects for the FTs and this year while in the Studio the Third year FT students had the opportunity to provide competing designs for an altar frontal, for St Paul's Old Ford Church, London. So much did the working group from the church like the designs that they incorporated two of

them in the one frontal and the third year students then worked the piece, completing it just after graduation. This gave them a really excellent opportunity to work collectively which is one of the hallmarks of the RSN and also to work to budgets and deadlines.

Five students graduated this year and they were able to hold an exhibition and share the presentation of the awards with their family and friends. The FT graduates also took a lead role in the classes for school pupils and families, sponsored by the Worshipful Company of Broderers, at our Anniversary exhibition.

Impact

With all tuition returning to onsite this had a very positive impact on building community. Alongside this was the opportunity for the students to return to demonstrating and teaching at offsite events which is key to developing teaching skills. Using demonstration frames the students had the opportunity to show their skills and talk about the work, which was always a big draw.

Online comment on the Future Tutor programme

"What an impressive hands-on training opportunity! I had no idea that something as special & unique as this was available!! The students here will never forget these unbelievable experiences! To train & learn by experts of this calibre is a lifetime opportunity that will be treasured forever!! Bravo!!"



Signature pieces by the FT third years, top left Nao Nagamura, Close up from Natalie Rowe, Amanda Rymel, Lower row left Sonia Lee and above Sally Randle. Sally Randle's piece was shortlisted for the Hand and Lock Prize (Student Textile Art), the winner of which will be announced in January 2023.

Degree

It was the third year students on our degree programme who were probably the most affected by the pandemic, interrupting their first year with lockdown, causing them to stay home in the second year, and so missing out on some of the shared experiences of university. Nevertheless, all students passed and at the top end there was work that sat well alongside that from other years. For example, Daisy Streatfeild has been selected by the Crafts Council as 'one to watch' making this the third year in a row that an RSN student has been selected as such by the Crafts Council.

Meanwhile, it was the largest ever intake into the first year with 26 students. The RSN prides itself on developing interesting partnerships especially for live projects. This year one such external project was called 'Fields of Everywhen': First and second year students created works based on the life stories of people living in Thamesmead for a 25m digitally printed balloon and the project also enabled us to work with Degree alumnus Livia Papiernik.

The second year live project gave all the second year students the opportunity to be inspired by the lingerie section of the RSN 150th Anniversary exhibition and create a new camisole, all made up in rapid speed by Degree Technician Emily Howse. The camisoles showed a great deal of variety, even to the point where some were clearly contemporary outerwear as opposed to underwear. It is a rare opportunity for first and second year degree students to have work on public display but this is something the RSN tries to offer its students because it requires them to think of the possibility of a piece going on show, considering more carefully the quality, finish and need to work to a deadline. These are skills which will be useful in the third year and in their professional life.

Behind the scenes much of the year was taken up with obtaining validation with Kingston University (KU). The aim of moving from validation with the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) to Kingston University is based around the proximity of resources, so it will be easier for students to access library resources for example, and to

look at developing joint projects in a way that was not physically possible with the partner site at Farnham. Validation was achieved and for the next two years we will teach out the UCA students while taking on the first KU students.

The Degree was also able to hold its own show at Hampton Court and participate in New Designers as a live show, it having been online for two years. The value of the live show is the way students get to see the work of others and share feedback which just does not work the same online. The exhibition also led to a number of students being given commissions.

All of this is thanks to the teaching and time commitment given by the staff to the students.

Impact

The impact of the Degree is to show people what can be achieved in embroidery at the cutting edge of design and making. Each year students are challenged to develop their final major projects in exciting and innovative ways so that they achieve something new. This work is in contrast to the precision and two-dimensionality of much of the Future Tutor work and shows how embroidery can be brought alive and be very contemporary.

The listing of one of the graduates by the Crafts Council for the third year running is a great recognition of this course, as are the awards its students won from the Glovers' competition to achieving a first, second, third and commended from the Bradford Textile Competition.

The exhibition at the Fashion and Textile Museum showed the work of more than a dozen graduates of the Degree giving visitors a real chance to see what could be achieved with embroidery today and gave the graduates a very important exhibition opportunity. Some of the best pieces have been on almost constant exhibition for the RSN and others since their creation which is an excellent start to their professional CVs.

"Oh my goodness! I want to do this so badly, seeing all your students sitting there working on their stunning pieces! Completely inspirational" Instagram post about the Degree."



Above, Eliza Gomersall, right Daisy Streatfeild, next page Amelia Gething



Talks and Bespoke classes

In response to popular demand the RSN maintained its twice monthly talks, led by Chief Executive Dr Susan Kay-Williams on the history of the RSN, a key topic in this critical anniversary year, and Contextual Studies tutor Amy Hare on the treasures in the RSN's Collection and Archive. These have garnered interest from around the world and helped to build a community of those who love stitch but who may no longer be able to stitch themselves, but who enjoy the shared experience of seeing the wonderful examples of stitch from the RSN's Collection. Also this year we invited external speakers to talk, from Claire Hunter talking about Mary Queen of Scots to those talking about their own work.

In turn, alongside the talks, we worked with partners across this country from the D Day Story Museum in Portsmouth to the Royal Collection, although we were sad to have to abandon the long-planned workshops in association with the coronation exhibition at Windsor as they had been planned for the week after Her Majesty died. Notwithstanding the unfortunate dates, we will be looking to extend classes in this area in the future as people enjoy seeing the connections between RSN work and the techniques they can explore in classes and it also enables us to reach more people in their own communities.

New and existing partnerships also extended our hand embroidery classes to new customers and positioned us alongside leading museums and institutions. Two new key partners were Kensington Palace and The Courtauld. The partnership class at The Courtauld on 13 May included a Chinese student studying at the Royal College of Art; an MA student and a PHD student studying at The Courtauld, and several American students including one

who watches our talks and was inspired to take a class with us while vacationing in London.

Impact

The online talks in particular continue to have a strong impact. With the addition of external speakers who may have their own followings this has also opened the RSN talks to more people. In 2021-22, we staged 20 talks each attracting an average of 170 viewers. We have built up an international online community of regular attendees from an average of 12 countries, but up to 36 countries in total, across the globe who converse with us and each other in the Chat during the talks and send us emails of thanks after each talk. Here is an example sent in February 2022 from an Australian devotee:

"I think we have been truly blessed and privileged to see all these amazing treasures from the RSN Collection and sometimes items from the tutors' private collections!! You could not possibly have shared all these items in an exhibition of any sort!! And, the new perspective every presentation and interview gives us on how embroidery developed and what influenced over the decades - I am just fascinated!! I leap up at 4.45am to get connected and enjoy each presentation! It is so worthwhile!!"

With the partnership classes the impact has been to reach new audiences and offer classes in different places enabling more people who can access the RSN perhaps for the first time but can then build a future relationship and in holding classes alongside pieces made by the RSN it helps to put stitch and the RSN's work in a wider context. Below are two pieces from the Grove Book, a collection of textile fragments, so many that one lecture was given in 2021 with a follow on being scheduled in 2023 for part two.



Examples from The Grove Book which was the subject of a talk.

RSN Studio

This year the Studio was asked to create two large hangings for the Katie Paterson Studio, they were to depict extinct flowers so they were worked in black thread. To ensure the flowers were represented authentically the stitch team used tablets to show detailed drawings of each plant which they worked but they had the freedom to then work the final piece in a more freestyle way than in many projects. The pieces were needed to a tight timescale as they were both going on exhibition, one in Scotland and one in Norway. Working with a team of stitchers, both of the hangings were finished on time. It was great for the Studio to work on something which was clearly seen as art rather than craft.

The team also worked on a project with Jay Blades' Company to enhance and restore two Parker Knoll chairs which formed the centrepiece of our display for Decorex. This project gave us the chance to use the archive as a design source and view the piece differently and in a more commercial manner by combining print and stitch. Other work continued in the classic tradition of the RSN Studio to be a mixture of small jobs, from wedding veils and christening robes, to samplers and historic garments while most larger jobs this year were around

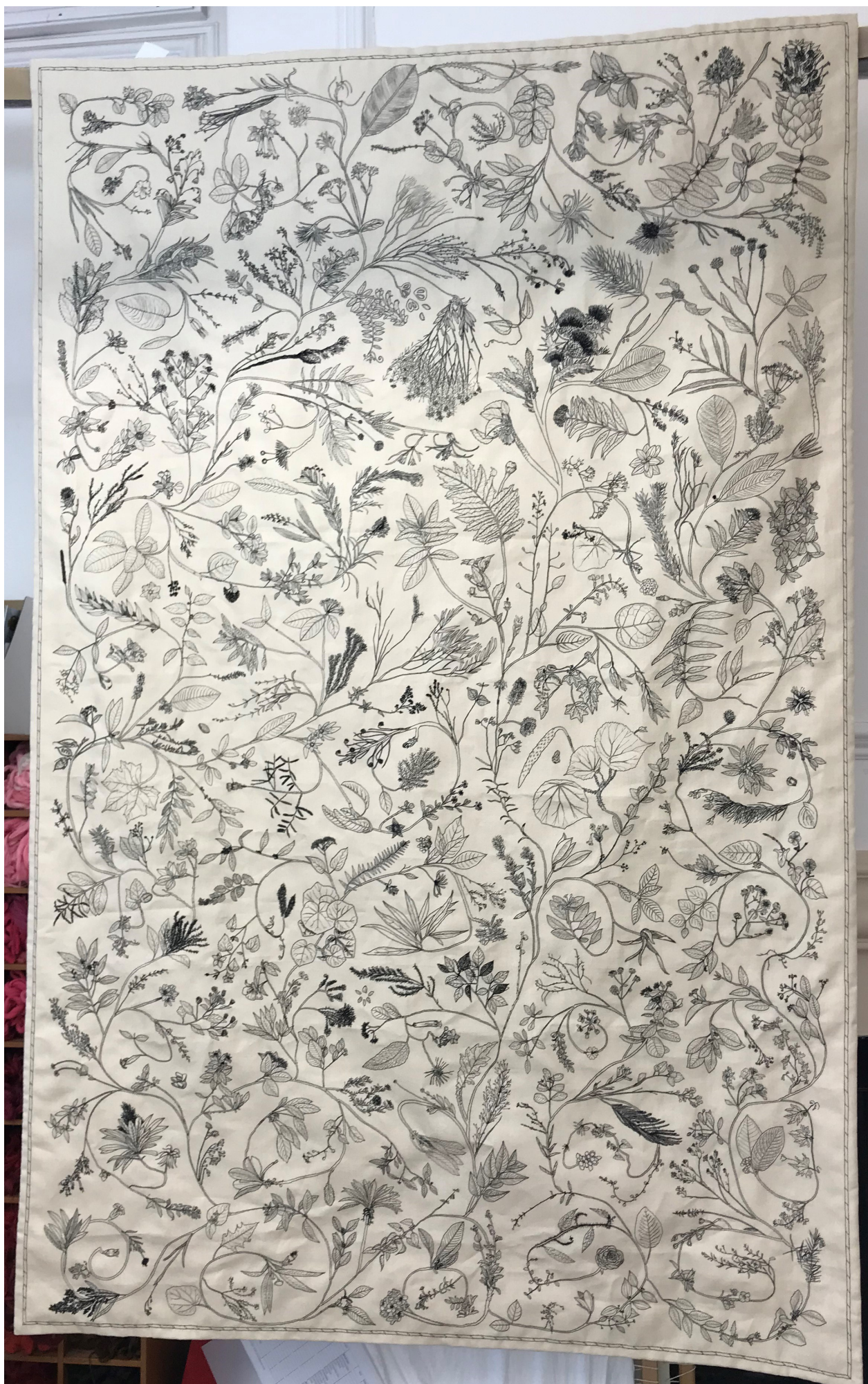
conservation for banners, altar frontals and standards, including a private commission for Her late Majesty The Queen, our final piece of work for her which was of personal significance, finished shortly before she died.

At the beginning of the year the RSN Studio was invited to make a piece for the Worshipful Company of Broderers' exhibition held in February. The Studio took the opportunity to make a modern twist on Jacobean Crewelwork, shown below. The piece also featured in our 150th Anniversary exhibition at the Fashion and Textile Museum and will be of great use in the future to show how different embroidery techniques can be brought forward to today.

Impact

The new partnerships and projects this year show the potential of the Studio to work in creative and contemporary ways and will enable us to promote its work to new potential customers such as Interior Designers and architects. As previously mentioned, it was great for the Studio to work on something which was clearly seen as art rather than craft as we continue to promote the practise and relevance of embroidery in the current day.





One of two hangings for the Katie Paterson Studio created by the RSN Embroidery Studio and exhibited in Scotland and Nor-

150th anniversary events

Project Manager Emma Doggart worked extremely hard over the year to build partnerships for our special anniversary. Two of particular note were with Fullers Builders, also celebrating 150 years, and the children's programmes at the Fashion and Textile Museum with the Worshipful Company of Broderers. These enabled us to reach new audiences and show our work in different ways, attracting a diverse range of individuals to stitch.

The highlight was undoubtedly the *150 years of the RSN Crown to Catwalk* exhibition at the Fashion and Textile Museum (FTM) curated by the RSN Chief Executive and the team at the FTM. The aim was to surprise visitors, showing even those who thought they knew the RSN well, that there were things to surprise them in the RSN's past. Reports back showed this had been achieved. The exhibition had well over 100 objects from the largest number of lenders that the FTM had ever worked with and covered the full span of the RSN's 150 years. The standout pieces were the royal Robe of Estate of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth from 1937 and the cope of Edward VII from 1902 which had stunning almost three-dimensional flowers, lent courtesy of Her late Majesty the Queen and the Royal Collection.

Also for this special year the Chief Executive produced a history of the RSN *An Unbroken Thread*, as there was no such review of the whole era. With a foreword by our Patron, now the Queen Consort, this was an appropriate publication for all the fans and supporters of the RSN.

At the exhibition, with the support of the Worshipful Company of Broderers we were able to run school and family events. We were somewhat thwarted by train strikes and the decision of the FTM that the school classes had to be early morning, but this was made up for by the enthusiastic participation of families. All age groups from Grannies to young school age participated, Mums and Dads, Sons and Daughters in an overwhelmingly quiet and productive environment. Many people discovered a new hobby and saw its potential, actively wanting to pursue it further at home.

During the summer we introduced a participation activity that could also be a fundraiser for the RSN, called Sip and Stitch. Launched on World Embroidery Day it was taken up by groups from around the world and raised money for the RSN Stitch Bank. We encouraged groups to sit and stitch but also have fun around embroidery with quizzes about stitching and the RSN. We will be extending this initiative next year.

We also partnered with another company which celebrated its 150th anniversary, Fullers Builders, a heritage building and conservation specialist company and so from the start we had many things in common. We held skill swap days so that we could learn about the trades and crafts of each other. The company also supported the exhibition and gave staff a tour round.

Impact

The impact of our 150th events was to extend our reach bringing the RSN to the attention of more people and the exhibition achieved its aim of surprising people by the variety of the work the RSN had accomplished as well as the high skill level shown across so many techniques both in the past and today.

150th Anniversary Exhibition quotes from social media

"It was glorious . Whole thing such a joy. Every word and visual. Thank you"

"A wonderful exhibition. Well worth a visit I was truly inspired"

"I really enjoyed my visit and the workshop on the Thursday was very therapeutic."

"This is a lovely exhibition, I saw and learned so much"

The biggest impact of the Exhibition was the schools and Family Days. All eight School days were fully booked and we added extra Family Days due to demand, even abandoning the planned lunch break due to the popularity so everyone who wanted to could take part. Each day approximately 150-200 people attended the exhibition and almost all of them dropped in to have a go on the nine Family Days



Teachers commented on the positive effect the exhibition had had on pupils and perhaps the greatest endorsement is the teacher who wrote and asked what we were offering for pupils this year.

"I was writing to enquire if we could possibly organise another trip ...with our pupils. We loved our trip and it really started an embroidery craze."

"I just wanted to write and thank you for the incredible experience we had with you yesterday morning. Our pupils have come back and are still sewing (we had a few tapestry rings at school). They are so excited about learning new stitches"

And from Family days we had comments like;

"We loved the hands on embroidery session - ended up buying a hoop and threads for my daughter and she's been loving experimenting with different stitches."

The Sip and Stitch event attracted 65 event hosts registered from countries round the world, including UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Spain and South Africa which is a broader spread than we could have anticipated.

International Summer School 2022

As people were more willing to travel, it was decided to make the 2022 Summer School both on line and face to face at Hampton Court Palace, once again celebrating our 150th anniversary through eight special classes, seven of which were then repeated online, with some additional shorter classes online that could reach from New Zealand to the West Coast of North America. People travelled from a wide range of countries to be part of the onsite anniversary Summer School and for this special year, the event was not just the taught class but also comprised a tea party, a visit to our 150th Anniversary Exhibition and a visit to the RSN Studio. Overall the Summer School generated almost as much income as the preceding year which is no mean achievement when people had many more choices of what to do in the summer than they had in 2021.

However, we recognise that five day events were quite expensive and so, going forward we will be looking at shorter sessions so that more people can participate.

Impact

Overall, we were thrilled with the numbers taking part and those who came in person for the eight onsite classes were particularly happy with the extras that had been laid on. While online students were happy to take the class at home and still feel part of the wider event.

One student used the Summer School to road test us and see if she liked us...by the end of the week she had

joined as a Friend, signed up for C&D and bought a set of trestles and she is now onsite regularly and is part way through her Jacobean and always comes to say hello!

"I am still full of the joy that I got from the time at the RSN - it was so wonderful! Thank you for making it such a memorable experience. I'll never forget the tea in the garden, and I cherish the lovely gifts in the goody bag - thank you." (Netherlands)

"Just a quick note to send you and the team a big THANK YOU for all your time and effort put into organizing an online Summer School. I've had so much fun with Kate's class and have actually finished my piece today. I am very proud of my achievement and in general how much I've learned at the RSN in the last year. Embroidery is giving me so much joy, I am really glad I found the RSN. And: I've signed up for the certificate last week" (Germany)

"Thank you so much for hosting the wonderful reception (I joined the UK one)! It was great to meet some of the RSN leaders and participants." (UK)

"I think I can safely say we all loved taking your class. Great coaching, excellent camera work, wonderful patience, fine sense of humour and lively conversation. I loved stretching the class out over weeks - felt I could actually have time to do the project." (USA)



Work embroidered by the RSN which featured in the 150th anniversary exhibition at the Fashion and Textile Museum, London.



Retail

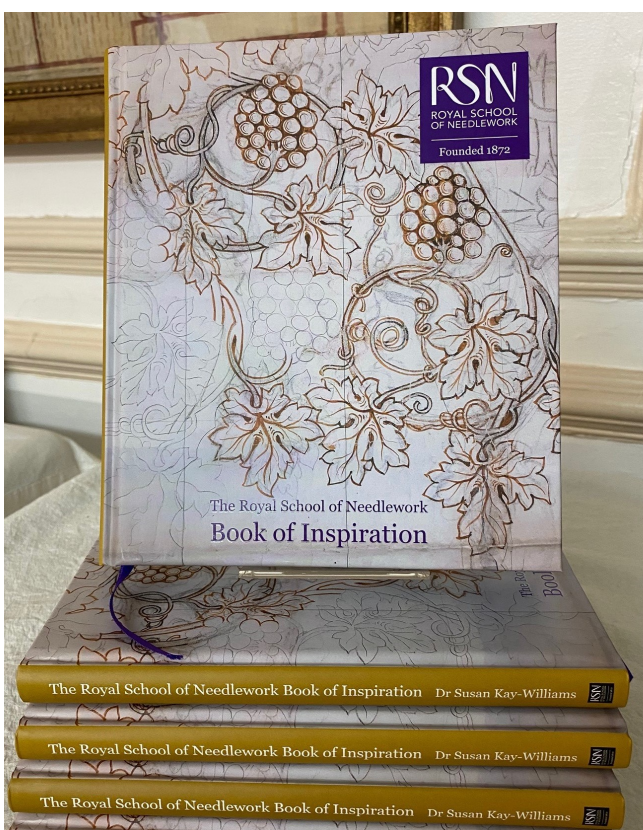
Inspired by our 150th Anniversary the retail offering of the RSN endeavoured to reflect our history selecting three images to represent the different periods of the RSN – a design by Selwyn Image from the 19th Century, a 1950s laid work student piece of a curlew and a piece by Degree Graduate Livia Papiernik who graduated in 2018. We also worked with specialist cutlers to produce some limited edition embroidery scissors which proved very popular.

We also added a range of pens, pencils and stationery including an inspiration book which featured over 60 images of works in the RSN Textile Collection with a blank page opposite so that people could devise their own drawings and designs based on the pieces they saw.

Also available through the shop was the book written by RSN Chief Executive Dr Susan Kay-Williams, *An Unbreakable Thread* of the 150 year history of the RSN, who personally signed many copies. At the year end the shop showed a higher profit than previous years having been able to open its physical doors as Hampton Court Palace opened again to the public and will be working with the new Director of Operations to develop this further.

Impact

For many the retail department is the first part of the RSN they encounter so it provides a service not just for retail but across the RSN.



Friends

Friends are tremendous supporters of the RSN and we are always happy to see RSN Friends at events. During the year Friends played an important part in providing funding for student bursaries on both the Degree and Future Tutor programmes. They also supported many of our exhibitions and especially the talks online.

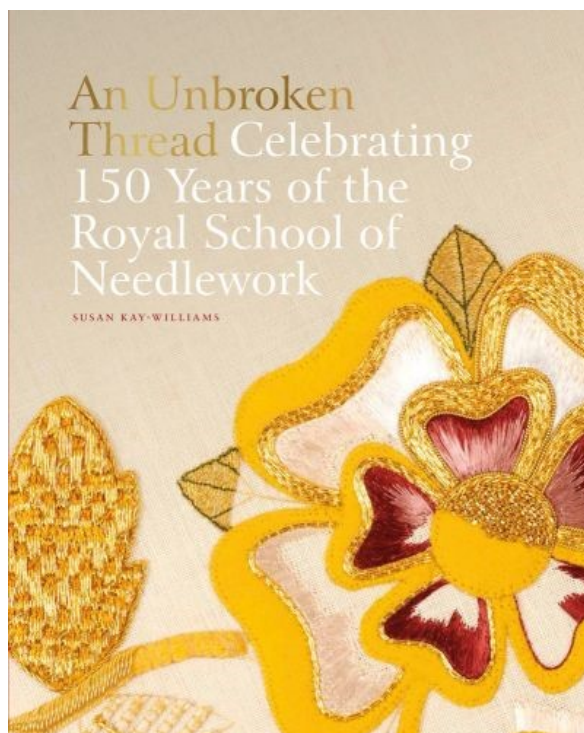
We also introduced a special one-week advance booking period for Friends for each season of courses and Friends get a ten per cent discount on those courses. This has proved popular and a good reason for being a Friend, especially on popular classes.

We also recognise Friends as having the potential to help us with legacy gifts and this was the case this year with a large legacy from a Canadian Friend. This will be an area that we continue to promote given the demographic of our supporters by showing how transformative a legacy can be to the work we can do for future generations.

Impact

Friends are a strong community of very loyal people, many of whom have supported the RSN for years. The funding from the Friends meant that we could offer more bursaries and enhance some of them so that we could better support the students. This was really appreciated by the students whether it was used for basics like travel and food or, especially for the third years, for quality materials for their final projects.

I used a huge range of materials for the embroidery, ranging from hundreds of beads, to beetle wings to mirrors. Having the bursary has ensured that I have been able to use as many different materials as I need. The silk dupion and silk velvet was also a large cost in the project so having the bursary helped to cover the cost of these. The bursary also allowed me to invest in more sewing tools.



Promotion

Our small team of Marketing and External Relations staff, expanded this year with the addition of its first Digital Marketing Officer in April, worked very hard to extend the reach of the RSN through as many channels as possible; perhaps the highest achievement being a two page article in the weekend Financial Times to coincide with our 150th Anniversary. Articles like this bring us to different audiences and so can have a very positive effect. We also featured in regional and local magazines, making the cover of two, and in some magazines internationally thanks to some of our supporters. However, the main promotion has been through social media where the RSN has built a solid following especially on Facebook and Instagram. This has helped us to promote events, classes and retail items. 'Live' content through video and Instagram Reels has been key. We produced videos to open the RSN doors to our newly acquired international audience with

11 'RSN 150' videos and four 'Welcome to...' videos covering various departments.

It has been particularly important to market online tuition, the 'new way' of learning which has increased the RSN's potential audience over the last year, producing student case studies to illustrate the ease of accessibility and how much it has been needed and loved by students learning in countries across the world.

Impact

With investment in targeted social media and Google advertising alongside influencer marketing, the RSN website attracted a new audience of 14% with similar increases across individual platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. This increased audience then helped us achieve our targets or better across the short courses and Summer School.



Overall review of performance

The year was a mixture of continued living with the effects of the pandemic through to emerging from restrictions and starting to live a more normal life again. Where not essential for students and customers to be at Hampton Court Palace we delivered short courses online, finally re-introducing onsite classes in late Spring and Summer. We were also delighted that celebrations for our 150th Anniversary which had been planned to ramp up from April 2022 with the launch of our major exhibition at the Fashion & Textile Museum in London were largely unaffected. We celebrated the RSN's anniversary in style and in as many ways as possible, using public exhibitions as our primary way of showcasing the heritage and achievements of the RSN to the public. These proved very popular and enabled us to hold multiple talks and classes on the back of the exhibitions.

The Certificate and Diploma, short courses and international summer school all achieved positive income levels above budget which helped underpin the whole. Degree with a fixed income, given that student fees have not increased, benefited from a few extra international students and from spending less than budgeted, FTs benefited from additional fundraised income that supported the whole course. Income was up for Retail, thanks in part to merchandise sourced specifically in support of our 150th Anniversary year and the Studio also attracted some substantial commissions including two large hangings.

Future developments:

The Year Ahead

While the RSN continues to celebrate its 150th anniversary into 2023, we are also looking ahead and using the feedback and insights gained from the listening exercise undertaken in the first half of the year and the early thoughts from our "What If" project to build on the foundations of the past 150 years and ensure the RSN grows stronger and remains relevant for stitchers today.

We have introduced a new position of Director of Education and made an appointment which will take effect in February 2023, This is a new post which will take on overall responsibility for all our core educational programmes. One of the first tasks will be to undertake a strategic review of our current course offerings and make recommendations for improvements and developments.

We are currently reviewing our broader vision and values and our role in the wider community asking a variety of stakeholder groups to help us answer the question 'What If?'. We want to ensure we are actively working to put stitch into the heart of the community, showing how stitch can enhance wellbeing and bringing people together through the shared language of stitch.

We are inspired by the potential of the 'What If' question while also ensuring efficient delivery of our core operations.



150 Forward Campaign

The RSN does not receive any government funding so has to earn or raise all the funds it needs for its work. In particular we have raised funds to support students bursaries on the Degree and Future Tutor programmes.

We also need to raise funds for activities we undertake such as the RSN Stitch Bank. While the 150th anniversary is a milestone it is not an ending, but rather the beginning of the next 150 years. Inspired by reviewing our history there are many developments that we would like to undertake but these can only be brought to fruition if we can raise the funds.

During the anniversary year we launched the 150 Forward Campaign to raise funds for new developments in our core educational areas and in particular for the

RSN to develop a new strand of work to look at how we can use stitch to enhance individual wellbeing and bring people and communities together through stitch. The RSN believes that stitch can offer many opportunities to people for positive mental health and wellbeing and we want to use our skills to promote and develop this. The first appeal mailing was sent out during the financial year and this was followed up in 2022-23.

Aims of the campaign directly support our mission broaden participation in stitch. We also want to diversify the people who participate in stitch through the RSN, to use our recognised skills to help more people, meet with different communities and to inspire a new generation to get involved with stitch.



Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester

RSN
ROYAL SCHOOL
OF NEEDLEWORK
150 YEARS
Founded 1872

150 Forward Campaign

Help us to secure the future of hand embroidery
for an ever changing world

Financial Picture 2021-22

The consolidated statement of financial activities for the year shows a net surplus (before investment gain and losses) of £228,203 (2020/21: surplus of £109,195).

The overall income for the year 2021/22 amounted to £2,747,686 (2020/21: £2,272,430), a year-on-year increase of 21%. Income from donations and legacies increased by 19% to £513,330 (2020/21: £430,171). This includes legacies totalling £260,157 (2020/21: £73,415) and £3,444 (2020/21: £129,496) of grant income from the Government Job Retention Scheme and other Local Government grants. Donations and legacies remain an extremely important source of income. The trading subsidiary's income of £384,064 (2020/21: £288,112) increased by 33% as the Studio activity has no longer been hampered by social distancing and the physical shop has reopened.

Income from charitable School activities amounted to £1,694,473 (2020/21: £1,405,564) a 21% increase year on year due to the continued popularity of online learning, return to more in-person classes and the International Summer School that was held both online and in-person. Investment income increased by 7% to £158,419 (2020/21: £148,583). The restricted fund income of £134,175 (2020/21: £177,142) consisted of resources earmarked for the Degree and Future Tutor programmes, the RSN Stitch Bank and Collection and Archive Digitisation Campaigns. Restricted expenditure of £176,706 (2020/21: £210,212) was incurred against the Degree and Future Tutor programmes, for the RSN Stitch Bank project, the Schools/Family workshops at the Fashion and Textile Museum and also the ongoing depreciation on the capital costs of setting up the new classrooms at Hampton Court Palace in 2015.

Total expenditure for the year was £2,519,483 (2020/21: £2,163,235), an increase of 16%. Costs have increased in 2021/22 to help deliver the charitable School activities.

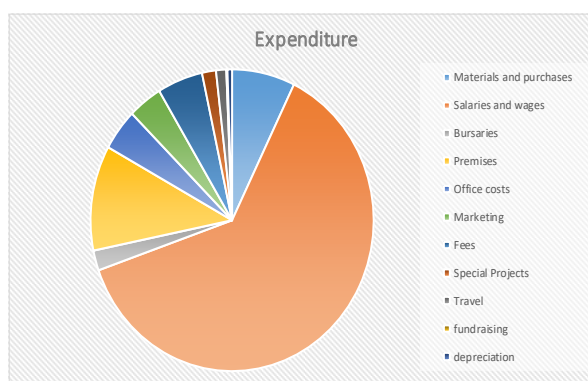
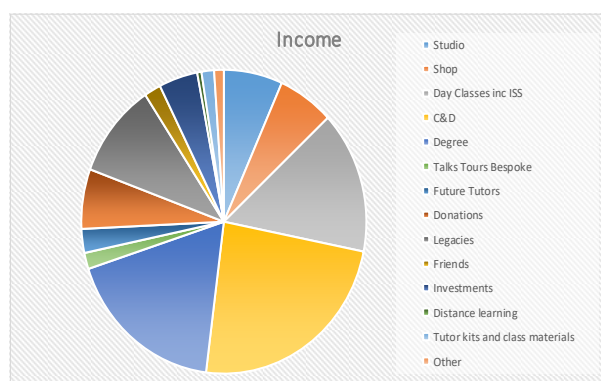
Net realised and unrealised losses on investments for the year amounted to £755,541 (2020/21: £887,626 net

realised and unrealised gains). At the balance sheet date, net assets totalled £5,770,238 (2021: £6,297,516) of which £2,620,470 (2021: £2,711,355) are unrestricted.

The Royal School of Needlework has an investment of £100 (2020/21: £100) in the share capital of RSN Enterprises Limited, a wholly owned company which is incorporated in England and Wales. The net trading income of the company for the year amounted to a deficit of £3,899 (2020/21: deficit of £8,572).

The Council has examined the requirements for free reserves, i.e. those unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets, designated for specific purposes or otherwise committed. During 2021/22, the Council reviewed the Charity's reserves policy and confirmed it to be five months' total expenditure at any one time plus the additional commitments on the licence at Hampton Court. In coming to this conclusion, the Council considered the nature of the charity's work and the discretionary nature of a significant proportion of income. Based upon budgeted expenditure levels for 2022/23, the maximum expenditure for five consecutive months plus commitments on the Hampton Court licence would be in the region of £1,534,000. The Council is of the opinion that this provides sufficient flexibility to cover temporary shortfalls in incoming resources due to timing differences in income flows, adequate working capital to cover core costs and will allow the charity to cope with and respond to unforeseen emergencies whilst specific action plans are implemented.

The charity has total reserves of £5,770,238 (2021: £6,297,516). This includes endowment funds and restricted funds of £2,885,367 (2021: £3,275,767) and £259,520 (2021: £305,574) respectively and designated funds of £856,029 (2021: £610,000). After deducting funds represented by tangible fixed assets and shareholders' funds, this leaves free reserves at 31 August 2022 of £1,725,209 (2021: £2,057,035). There is currently an excess of free reserves over the target level of £1,534,000. Given the current economic uncertainty, the Council is of the opinion that the level of free reserves held is prudent at this time.



Consolidated statement of financial activities (including the income and expenditure account) year ending 31 August 2022

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Endowment funds £	2022 Total funds £	2021 Total funds £
Income and expenditure					
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	379,155	134,175	—	513,330	430,171
Investments	158,419	—	—	158,419	148,583
Other trading activities	381,464	—	—	381,464	288,112
Charitable activities					
• School activities	1,694,473	—	—	1,694,473	1,405,564
Total income	2,613,511	134,175	—	2,747,686	2,272,430
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds	485,000	6,753	—	491,753	395,030
Charitable activities					
• Costs of school activities	1,857,477	169,953	300	2,027,730	1,768,205
Total expenditure	2,342,477	176,706	300	2,519,483	2,163,235
Net income/(expenditure) before investment gains and losses	271,034	(42,531)	(300)	228,203	109,195
Realised losses on investments	(73,745)	(718)	(79,488)	(153,951)	(398)
Unrealised (losses)/gains on investments	(288,173)	(2,805)	(310,612)	(601,590)	888,024
Net movement in funds	(90,884)	(46,054)	(390,400)	(527,338)	996,821
Reconciliation of funds:					
Fund balances brought forward at 1 September 2021	2,711,355	305,574	3,275,767	6,292,696	5,295,875
Fund balances carried forward at 31 August 2022	2,620,471	259,520	2,885,367	5,765,358	6,292,696

Trustees' Statement

The trustees confirm that these summarised financial statements on pages 21 and 22 are a summary of information from the full annual report and financial statements which were approved by the Board of Trustees on 1 February 2023. A copy of the full annual report and financial statements, upon which the auditor has reported without qualification, will be submitted to the relevant statutory bodies, including the registrar of companies and the Office for Students. These summarised financial statements may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the Royal School of Needlework. Further information and the full financial statements are available online or by contacting the Chief Executive at: the Royal School of Needlework, Apt 12a, Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU

Balance Sheet 31 August 2022

	Group		Charity	
	2022 £	2021 £	2022 £	2021 £
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets	39,233	44,320	39,233	44,320
Investments	5,381,018	6,181,660	5,381,118	6,181,760
	5,420,251	6,225,980	5,420,351	6,226,080
Current assets				
Stocks	77,535	66,368	31,736	25,037
Debtors	411,357	137,430	492,729	215,950
Cash at bank and in hand	571,937	488,761	559,962	467,668
	1,060,829	692,559	1,084,427	708,655
Creditors: amounts falling due				
within one year	(710,842)	(621,023)	(678,864)	(585,440)
Net current assets	349,987	71,536	405,562	123,215
Total net assets	5,770,238	6,297,516	5,825,914	6,349,295
Represented by:				
Capital and reserves				
Called up share capital	230	240	230	240
Capital redemption reserve	4,650	4,580	4,650	4,580
	4,880	4,820	4,880	4,820
The funds of the charity:				
Endowment funds	2,885,367	3,275,767	2,885,367	3,275,767
Restricted funds	259,520	305,574	259,520	305,574
Unrestricted funds:				
. General fund	1,764,442	2,101,355	1,820,118	2,153,134
. Designated funds	856,029	610,000	856,029	610,000
	5,765,358	6,292,696	5,821,034	6,344,475
	5,770,238	6,297,516	5,825,914	6,349,295

Independent Auditor's Statement to the Trustees of the Royal School of Needlework

We have examined the summarised financial statements set out on pages 21 and 22.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and auditor

The trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised financial statements in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law. Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summarised financial statements with the full financial statements and the trustees' report. We also read the other information included in the annual report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summarised financial statements.

Basis of opinion

We conducted our work in accordance with Bulletin 2008/3 'The auditors' statement on the summary financial statement' issued by the Auditing Practices Board for use in the United Kingdom. Opinion: In our opinion the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements and the trustees' report of the Royal School of Needlework for the year ended 31 August 2022.



Above Final project by degree student Sabina Lima. Back page Final project by Degree student Alex Hawes



Royal School of Needlework, Apt 12A Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU Tel 02031666932

<https://royal-needlework.org.uk> Registered Charity no.312774