

ELAINE REICHEK

“*Something Betwixt and Between*” – *Matisse & Bloomsbury*

January 18–March 1, 2025



For over five decades, Elaine Reichek has been engaged in rereading a wide range of historical images and texts from her own critical and feminist perspective. “*Something Betwixt and Between*” focuses on the fluid relationship between painting and textiles in the work of Henri Matisse and the Bloomsbury Group artists Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and Roger Fry. The exhibition is staged as a conversation among multiple images, motifs, and mediums that Reichek has sampled, translated, and reconfigured into alternative forms, as a way of thinking fluently across categories of art and craft in both material and conceptual terms, and grounded in the artist’s fascination with historical artistic practices that cross traditional genre boundaries.

Henri Matisse channeled his lifelong passion for textiles into a substantial collection of fabrics, costumes, and scraps that he called his “working library,” a deep well for his imagination. And though Matisse profoundly influenced the Bloomsbury artists, their own short-lived collaborative design firm, Omega Workshops (1913–19), anticipates his earliest commercial projects by nearly two decades. Meanwhile, even as Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell pursued design work well into the 1930s, the ultimate homebase for their artistic collaborations and alternative lifestyles was Charleston, Bell’s farmhouse in Sussex.

To unpack her research in a visual form, Reichek has assembled two folding screens — one for Matisse, the other for Charleston and Omega — each of which serves as an associative compendium of images and materials, in much the same spirit as art historian Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas*. Here, however, the choice of folding screens is historically specific — screens recur in Matisse’s paintings as a standard part of his studio furnishings. Bell and Grant designed several multi-panel screens as prototypes for fabrication and as unique works of art.

Screen Time with Matisse (2022–24) combines vintage textiles, archival images printed on fabric, and Matissean décor-merch in a free mashup that evokes the eclecticism of his taste and probes the limits of what we would now call his “brand.” Reichek also acknowledges the politically less attractive aspects of Matisse’s practice, including his primitivizing gaze and ambiguous relationships with female models and collaborators. *Screen Time*’s deliberate informality contrasts with the gridded arrangements of *A Charleston/Omega Screen Atlas* (2024), which juxtapose paintings with designs, portraits with snapshots, and archival with contemporary interior photographs, several of which were taken by or feature Reichek on her visits to Charleston in 2022 and 2024. On each side of this screen, the central panel is upholstered with reproduction furnishing fabrics that were originally designed by Grant in the 1930s and are now retailed by The Charleston Trust.

Reichek has used five of these Charleston Trust fabrics by Grant and Bell to make “Omega dresses,” designed in the high-waisted, corset-free style that Bell favored, modeled on freestanding dress forms. Pinned to the back of each dress is a linen tag hand-embroidered with a quote by Bell or her sister, Virginia Woolf, on the pressures of dressing for society, or a recollection of Bell’s homemade dressmaking by her daughter or granddaughter. Reinforcing these links between dressmaking and the body is a hand embroidery on green linen entitled *It Was Not Velvet* (Virginia Woolf) (2024), with a quote from Woolf’s posthumously published autobiographical piece “A Sketch of the Past,” to which is appliquéd a hand-sewn nude female figure by Bell.

Also reprised from the Charleston/Omega screen is a bouquet of *Omega Flowers* (2024), Reichek’s re-creation of the now-lost artificial “paper flowers” that Bell, Grant, and Fry routinely handcrafted as signature Omega products, personal gifts, and props for their own still-life paintings. Here Reichek follows new research by historian and curator

Wendy Hitchmough into the original mediums they used — paint applied to stiff tarlatan (“book linen”) and wire wrapped with green wool.

This associative method of quoting and remaking continues with other hand and digital embroideries. On the long wall of the gallery — painted a soft green like the interior at Monk’s House, the Sussex home of Virginia and Leonard Woolf — hangs *A Charleston Sampler* (2023–24), featuring seven needlepoint designs from seat covers, cushions, rugs, and other objects, here hand-embroidered with captions. Two small digital embroideries remake the front and back cut-out collage designs for a red chasuble (the sleeveless vestment worn by a priest) that Matisse conceived for the Chapelle du Rosaire in Vence. Another digital embroidery samples the textile pattern in Matisse’s 1926 painting *Lemons on a Pewter Plate*, while Duncan Grant’s *Matisse* (Digital Version) joins several conceptual and historical strands into a single focus.

On opposite sides of the gallery are a mismatched pair of digital embroideries featuring a set of pajamas that Bell designed for Fry with her fractured pattern “Maud,” but here rendered in two different historical colorways — the smaller in gray/green/blue, the larger in red/green/blue, framed by an actual sample of its corresponding Charleston reproduction fabric. Omega dresses also appear in two 2023 digital embroideries, *Nina Hamnett* by Roger Fry and *Vanessa Bell’s Figure and Tent*.

Two nine-part digital embroideries from 2006–07 reimagine Matisse’s cut-out collages as pinked “swatches” from the commercial textile market, and three hand embroideries feature his notated sketches for tapestry designs, recreated entirely in thread. Cut-out chasuble designs also reappear in the small side gallery, this time realized in colored felt, collaged, and appliquéd to white felt, with both sides of the chasuble design stacked vertically within a single large-format panel. For Reichek, felt represents a quintessential “craft” medium, even as it conceptually returns Matisse’s collaged-paper designs back to the materiality of textiles. Also in this gallery are digital and hand embroideries that feature images of clothing drawn from other historical, modern, and contemporary paintings and designs. Closing on an ironic note, offering an alternative vision of modernist utopian dress, a large digital embroidery on cotton canvas quotes a postcard souvenir evoking 1960s East Berlin: *Happy and Well Dressed (Paper Dolls)* (2024).

Elaine Reichek (b. 1943) lives and works in New York. She received a BA from Brooklyn College and a BFA from Yale University. She has exhibited extensively in the US and abroad since the mid-1970s, with solo exhibitions at Secession, Vienna; The Addison Gallery of American Art in Andover, MA; the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; the Tel Aviv Museum; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Jewish Museum, New York; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH; Stichting De Appel, Amsterdam; and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin. Her work is in the collections of New York’s Whitney Museum of American Art, Museum of Modern Art, Jewish Museum, Museum of Arts and Design, and Brooklyn Museum; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Museum, Philadelphia; Menil Collection, Houston; Dallas Museum of Art; Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas; and the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, among others. Reichek’s work has been included in *Painted with Silk: The Art of Early American Embroidery at the Detroit Institute of Arts* in 2024–25; *Joan Didion: What She Means* at the Hammer Museum in 2022 and the Pérez Art Museum Miami in 2023; *Venedigsche Sterne* at the Bündner Kunstmuseum, Chur, Switzerland, in 2022; *Art_Textiles* at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, UK, in 2015; *Art/Histories* at the Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, in 2014; the 2012 São Paulo Biennial in Brazil; and the 2012 Whitney Biennial.

BLOOMSBURY



1. *A Charleston Sampler*, 2023-24
hand embroidery on linen
30 ¾ x 36 ¾ inches

2. *Vanessa Bell's "Maud" for Roger Fry's Pajamas (Red, Green, Blue)*, 2022
digital embroidery* on linen with "Maud" fabric (linen/cotton/nylon blend), 31 x 27 ½ inches

3. *Duncan Grant's Matisse' (Digital Version)*, 2023
digital embroidery* on linen
18 ¾ x 13 ½ inches

4. *A Charleston/Omega Screen Atlas*, 2024
inkjet prints on cotton; furnishing fabrics (linen/cotton/nylon blend); silk scarf; acrylic paint and gel medium on tarlatan, with wire, wool, glue, beads, and ribbon; hand embroidery with buttons on linen; needlepoint on plastic mesh; printed post-card; elements pinned to 3-panel folding screen (fabric, wood, hinges)
72 ½ x 48 x 10 inches

5. *Nina Hamnett by Roger Fry*, 2023
digital embroidery* on linen
18 ¾ x 11 ½ inches

6. *Vanessa Bell's "Maud" for Roger Fry's Pajamas, Small Version (Gray, Green, Blue)*, 2023
digital embroidery* on linen
11 ½ x 11 inches

7. *It Was Not Velvet (Virginia Woolf)*, 2024
hand embroidery with appliqué on linen, 31 ½ x 19 ½ inches

8. *Vanessa Bell's Figure and Tent*, 2023
digital embroidery* on linen
15 ¼ x 18 ¼ inches

9. *Omega Flowers*, 2024
acrylic paint and gel medium on tarlatan, with wire, wool, glue, beads, ribbon, 54 x 17 x 17 inches

10. *Dress in Duncan Grant's "Queen Mary" Fabric*, 2024
dress* with vintage pin, ribbon

11. *Dress in Omega Workshop's "Pamela" Fabric*, 2024
dress* with mother-of-pearl broaches, ribbon

12. *Dress in Duncan Grant's "Clouds" Fabric*, 2024
dress* with pinned cloth flower

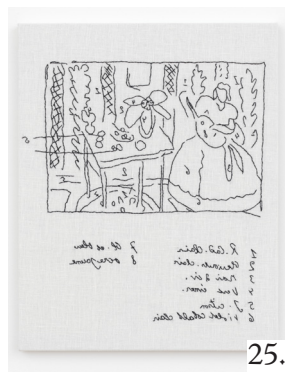
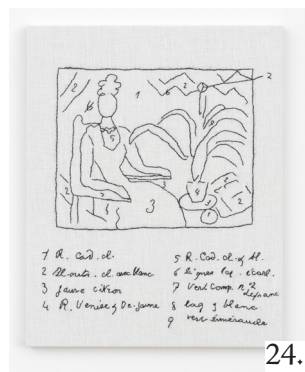
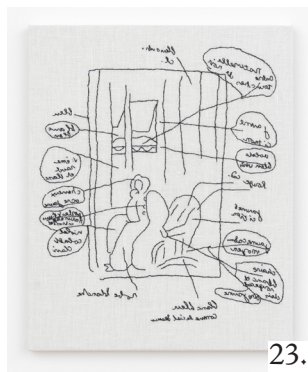
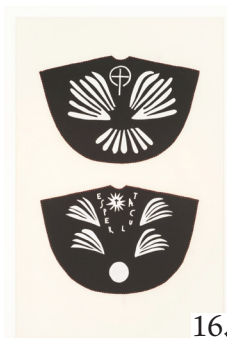
13. *Dress in Vanessa Bell's "White" Fabric*, 2023
dress* with pinned cloth flower and beads

14. *Dress in Duncan Grant's "West Wind" Fabric*, 2023
dress* with pinned cloth flower and beads

Notes: all dresses* in linen/cotton/nylon blend fabric and tag (hand embroidery on linen), displayed on dress form with wooden stand, 65 x 18 x 14 inches

digital embroidery* works are editions of 2 + 1 AP

MATISSE



15. *Screen Time with Matisse*, 2022-24
various fabrics and fabric swatches;
inkjet prints on cotton, silk, and paper;
hand embroidery with silk thread on linen;
Yoruba seed bag; Kuba cloth; felt, paper,
sock, wooden hanger; sewn and pinned to
3-panel folding screen (velvet, wood, hinges),
71 x 48 x 5 inches

16. *Matisse's Black Chasuble (Felt, Front and Back)*, 2024
felt and thread
45 ½ x 29 ½ inches

17. *Matisse's Pink Chasuble (Felt, Front and Back)*, 2024
felt and thread
45 ½ x 29 ½ inches

18. *Matisse's White Chasuble (Felt, Front and Back)*, 2024
felt and thread
45 ½ x 29 ½ inches

19. *Matisse's Green Chasuble (Felt, Front and Back)*, 2024
felt and thread
45 ½ x 29 ½ inches

20. *Matisse's Tablecloth*, 2018
digital embroidery* on linen
8 ¾ x 18 ½ inches

21. *Matisse's Design for a Curtain (Felt)*, 2024
felt, pins, and thread
27 ¼ x 23 inches

22. *Swatches, Matisse Leaves 1-9*, 2006
digital embroidery* on linen
overall 41 x 35 inches
each 12 x 10 inches

23. *Matisse's Tapestry Notes for "La Robe Violette"*, 2021
hand embroidery on linen
16 ¾ x 13 ½ inches

24. *Matisse's Tapestry Notes for "Michaela"*, 2021
hand embroidery on linen
16 ¾ x 13 ½ inches

25. *Matisse's Tapestry Notes for "Le Luth"*, 2021
hand embroidery on linen
16 ¾ x 13 ½ inches

26. *Swatches, Matisse 1-9*, 2007
digital embroidery* on linen
overall 41 x 35 inches
each 12 x 10 inches

* Please ask us to view Elaine Reich's source references for this exhibition.

CLOTHING



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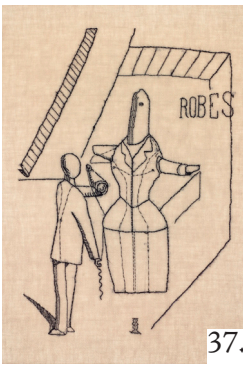
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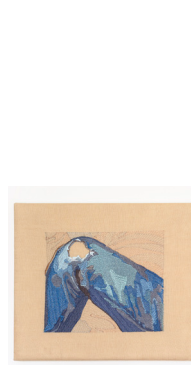
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27. "Happy and Well Dressed" (Paper Dolls), 2024
digital embroidery* on cotton canvas
20 x 31 ½ inches

28. Tissot Ruffle, 2020
digital embroidery* on linen
18 x 11 inches

29. Drapery Study (Michelangelo), 2018
hand embroidery on linen
15 ¾ x 10 ¼ inches

30. Thiebaud Dress, 2020
digital embroidery* on linen
21 ½ x 11 ¾ inches

31. Mukhina and Lamanova School Uniform, 2020
digital embroidery* on linen
14 x 20 ½ inches

32. Stepanova Sportswear, 2018
digital embroidery* on linen
16 ½ x 13 ¾ inches

33. Greuze, Bartolozzi, Chardin, 2018
hand embroidery on linen
13 ¼ x 27 ½ inches

34. Gauguin Pareo, 2020
digital embroidery* on linen
10 x 10 ¼ inches

35. Delacroix's Algerian Robes, 2018
hand embroidery on linen
9 x 11 inches

36. Joseph Hoffmann's Dress, 2022
digital embroidery* on linen
19 ½ x 12 ¾ inches

37. Max Ernst, "Let There Be Fashion...", 2024
hand embroidery on linen
17 x 12 inches

38. Miro Dress, 2018
digital embroidery* on linen
13 ¼ x 12 ½ inches

39. Delacroix's Striped Robe, 2021
hand embroidery on linen, 18 x 14 inches

40. Ripped Jeans and Blouse by Currin, 2021
digital embroidery* on linen
overall 15 x 28 ½ inches (two parts)

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