

MEDIA RELEASE



QUILTS FROM MILITARY FABRICS, A BLOCKBUSTER EXHIBITION IN NEW YORK, COMES TO ADELAIDE FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THE DAVID ROCHE FOUNDATION

Wartime Quilts, a blockbuster exhibition when shown in New York in 2017 and now *War and Pieced: The Annette Gero Collection of Quilts from Military Fabrics* comes to Adelaide for the first time opening 10 September.

25 breathtaking examples of geometric quilts - some of which contain as many as 25,000 pieces of fabric - are included, made from richly coloured wools by soldiers, sailors and regimental tailors. *Dr Annette Gero, a world authority on these historical quilts, owns the largest private collection of 'military intarsia' quilts spanning the 18th to 20th centuries. Many date from the Napoleonic Wars through the Crimean War to the British colonial wars in India and southern Africa as well as from World War I. This is a rare opportunity to see these incredible quilts* said Robert Reason, Museum Director, The David Roche Foundation.



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Now largely overlooked, 'military intarsia' quilting is an art form that was once widely practised in British and European countries. Wounded soldiers, prisoners of war and regimental tailors repurposed discarded military and dress uniforms to construct spellbinding patchwork mosaics with the most intricate and beautiful geometric patterns as well as pictorial scenes often showing life in a village or a political event. Often each piece of fabric was cut to no more than a couple of centimetres in size, then skilfully sewn from the back to create a perfectly smooth surface to the quilt. Like the intarsia mosaic woodwork technique, a flat picture is assembled that is identical front and back.

The quilts demonstrate not only the remarkable skill of the makers, but also reflect the preoccupations of these ordinary soldiers as they served in wartime – some declaring their patriotism with images of flags, coats-of-arms or embroidered portraits of monarchs, while others are more personally focussed with dedications to siblings or pastoral vignettes. These military quilts stand as a testament that beauty can still be derived from the most terrible of circumstances.

The first military quilt that Dr Gero found here was brought to Australia by Prussian immigrants from Germany in the 1850s showing a double headed eagle. Some of these quilts were brought here or made by immigrants to this country. *It is remarkable that these important textiles have been "lost" for so many years and have only just reappeared into our consciousness. We are fortunate to have saved this precious heritage and literally piece back together their family stories and history where possible. Collected from around the world, the exhibition War and Pieced is a must see for all quilt and textile lovers* said Dr Gero.

The book *Wartime Quilts, Appliqués and geometric quilts made from Military Fabrics* by Annette Gero, which serves as the catalogue for the exhibition, was named by the New York Times as one of the 10 best Art and Design books of 2017.

Dr Annette Gero, one of Australia's leading quilt historians, has been documenting and collecting quilts since 1982. She has travelled all over Australia giving lectures, curating exhibitions of Australian quilts and documenting quilts in private homes and public collections. She gained her PhD in 1982. In 1986 she was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society for Arts (London) in recognition of her work on Australian quilt history. Dr Gero is a member of the Advisory Board of the International Quilt Study Center, Nebraska, USA and an Associate Fellow; Founder and Patron of the Sydney Quilt Study Group; Past President of the Quilt Study Group of Australia; Lecturer, the Australian Academy of Decorative Arts, and her contribution to the history of Australian quilting has been documented in the Archives of the National Library of Australia, Canberra. She has lectured on quilt history in the USA, Canada, New Zealand, France and England, and exhibited quilts throughout Australia and at the Musee De L'impression Sur Etoffes, Mulhouse France; the Musee des Traditions et Arts, Normandy, France; the International Quilt Show in Houston, USA and the European Quilt Symposium, Alsace, France.



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Details:

War and Pieced: The Annette Gero Collection of Quilts from Military Fabrics

The David Roche Foundation House Museum

241 Melbourne Street, North Adelaide

10 September – 19 December 2020

Exhibition ticket \$10 Adults, \$8 Concession, Children 12 and under free. No booking required.

For talks and events see rochefoundation.com.au

For further information please contact Susanne Briggs

Susanneb1@ozemail.com.au or 0412 268 320

Caption:

Maker Unknown, A soldier's patchwork with incredible border, c.1855 (pre-1881), India or England

Red, yellow, black, green and blue felted wools taken from uniforms, all hand-sewn, hand-applied bead work, textural layered appliquéd border, 208 x 216 cm.



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