

“ There is no clear subject to the pieces so you project your own ideas onto the picture ”

HISTORY RESEWN

07 *1870:1970 (clown)*, Matt Smith. Reworked textile with wool

08 *Les Enfants*, Matt Smith. Reworked textile with wool



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The work of British artist Matt Smith examines issues raised by looking back at history and queerness.

Lucy Upward talks to the artist about his current tapestry work

Artist Matt Smith may be better known for his ornate ceramic ensembles, but his recent solo exhibition 'Trouble with History' at Brighton's Ink_d Gallery (ended 2 August) featured quite another string from Smith's bow: a series of tapestries. Smith, who explained to me that he had been working with textiles since he was as young as eight years old, has been hand-stitching this body of work for the last four and a half years. It was the first time the pieces were displayed together.

For the series, Smith has

collected vintage tapestries and needlepoint kits from car boot sales and eBay. He painstakingly unpicked the previous owners' works and then stitched his own designs in their place. Smith's images, as all of his works, are imbued with a sense of the historical, referencing antique portrait paintings and tapestries. It is no surprise that Smith was a curator for museums and art galleries prior to taking the plunge into artist life nine years ago.

Since working on his PhD in Queer Craft, Smith's work explores issues of identity and queerness.

He is fascinated by the fact that history is a constantly selected and refined narrative, and here he has created a group of what he refers to as 'anti portraits'. The foreground and background are almost reversed and the figures hover anonymously between spaces and identities. As Smith explains: 'There is no clear subject to the pieces so you project your own ideas onto the picture.'

Smith was recently awarded the position of Artist in Residence at the V&A in London, which begins in October 2015.

www.mattsmith.com