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## 10 Questions With... Julie Cockburn



Julie Cockburn (b. 1966) is best known for embellishing and altering found photographs, immaculately adding hand-embroidered shapes to vintage portraits and landscapes. Now, *Same but Different*, the new exhibition at Hopstreet Gallery in Brussels, presents the latest additions to Cockburn's ongoing body of work. The show revisits the artist's signature motifs of dancing dots, overlaid masks and concentric circles. Stitched starbursts pop out from blossoming trees. Pink bubbles float on top of lakes. Rainbow bullseyes appear in front of faces. Cockburn has been honing her unique approach since childhood, producing instantly recognisable pictures that blur the lines between conceptual art, photography and craft.

**A: Tell us about how you got into working with images - where did it all begin?**

**JC:** I come from a family of photographers - my mother worked at Scaioni Studios in London, my grandfather was a keen amateur all his life, and my cousin is Sally-Anne Thompson, a renowned animal photographer. I have photography in my blood, although I tend to use found photographs in my work rather than take photos myself.



**A: What's the focus or message behind your latest exhibition at Hopstreet Gallery?**

**JC:** This show, titled *Same but Different*, focusses on the process of looking at a picture and how we all tend to interpret the same image in different ways, depending on our own personal histories.

**A: Do you have a favourite piece in the show?**

**JC:** I love them all! They are like my offspring so it's difficult to choose a favourite. But I'm pleased at how the large-scale works, *Red Tree* and *Yellow Tree* turned out.

**A: Who - or what - are your biggest inspirations?**

**JC:** I keep revisiting the work of Pablo Picasso and recently I have been looking at the great compositions



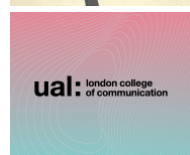
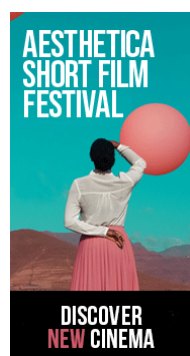
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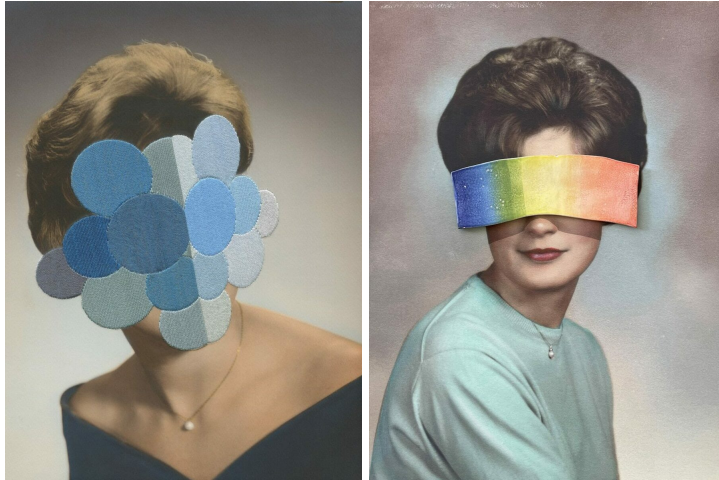
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of Sophie Taeuber-Arp. I love mid-century furniture design and often get inspiration whilst I'm walking my dog in the woods near where I live. The natural world has begun to play a bigger part in my work since I moved out of London five years ago.



**A: What's been the highlight of your career so far?**

JC: Every day I appreciate being fortunate enough to work as an artist full time.

**A: Do you have a "signature" technique or approach? What is it?**

JC: I'm probably best known for my embroidered photographs. I was taught to sew by my grandmother who made beautiful, hand-stitched still-lives and landscapes. People are intrigued that I stitch everything by hand, but it's the only way I can get the precision and finish that I want.

**A: If you could do any other job, or be an expert in any other field, what would it be?**

JC: A vet or an opera singer.



**A: Who are your favourite artists working right now?**

JC: Francis Alÿs, Kerry James Marshall, Lena Amuat & Zoë Meyer and Yayoi Kusama.

**A: Is there anything you hope audiences take away from the show?**

JC: It's a very upbeat, colourful exhibition. I had such fun making the work; there are new, experimental ceramic pieces and a flock of green embroidered parrots that I hope will bring people some joy.

**A: What are you working on right now? Anything for us to look forward to?**

JC: I am making a new body of work for a project in early 2024 in The Netherlands, and I'm planning a series of large-scale photo collages based on tiny found family snapshots. Varying techniques and working at different scales keeps my work interesting for me and, hopefully, the viewers.

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5 November – 22 December | [hopstreet.be](https://hopstreet.be)

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All images courtesy Julie Cockburn.

1. *Visor*, 2023
2. *Yellow Tree*, 2023
3. *Mermaid*, 2023
4. *Visor*, 2023
5. *Flare 4*, 2023

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