This text and image piece of work was blind reviewed and published in Textile: the Journal of Cloth and Culture 6:2, July 2008, 112-125. It was accompanied by 23 images (see footnotes or enclosed images).

The work originated from an invited presentation by Catherine Harper at Fabrica, Brighton in response to Catherine Bertola’s exhibition Prickings at that venue in 2006. Catherine Harper was also commissioned to write the catalogue essay for the exhibition (ISBN 0954338014).

1: Delicate decorative fabric, woven open web, symmetry of patterns or figures: a sisterhood of practice...lace fabric metaphors articulating private concerns...  

2: Negative nets of butter on glass – the kind old ladies look through and the less savoury peer through. Smear buttry fingerprints on panes, a yearning and repulsion, voyeuristic desires intermeshed with the evocative scent and taste of creamy butter and skin-scented lace...  

3. Hands in the soil, a man’s man, the ‘outdoors type’...pretty in lace...sweethouse greenhouse...  

4: Shotgun Stetsons off for a doily darling cowboy kissing his doily darling dude. Kicked to doily death off Brokeback Mountain. Chaps are for chaps, honey...  

5: Antique lace and jewelry – resonant ‘precious scraps’, value systems of time-invested charmed embellishment, demure decoration, and domestic decorum...lace figuring, skulls and skeletons, beaded birds, heroes and villains, and oversized cut-work...  

6: Cutting lazerlace in a ‘craftfutures’ terrain, vaporizing sections of synthetic polyester, creating heat-sealed techno-laces for the 21st century...  

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1 Catherine Bertola Posh Doily 2003, pencil on paper, 26cm x 26cm. 
2 Andrea Stokes Butter Net 2002, butter on glass, size variable. 
3 Sandra Flower Mix n Match 2007, stenciled greenhouse (photo credit: Terry Flower). 
4 Annet Couwenberg Dutch Shotgun Chaps detail 2007, thousands of paper doilies, pin, steel boning, fashion clip, fabric, each piece 52” x 28” x 15” (photo credit: Dan Meyers). 
5 Karen Nicol St George and the Dragon detail. 
6 Anne Smith Foliage triple layered laser cut 100% polyester fabric for fashion or interiors.
7: Lower, darker, tighter, to a frothy world of Lovelaced Linda and the rest...

Catherine Harper Lovelace 1997 cibachrome photograph.

8. ...fishnets fish, and Mickey Finn does his wicked best to lace my port and lemon...and “get the lady tiddly”...7

9: Readers’ wives picked out in lace bordering, hand-crafted by New England grandmothers or machine-made for tawdry nylon negligees... prim and intricately constructed, tiny pin pricks, and scaled-up porn, ecstatic representation...8

10: Needlepoint, lacemaking, sampler stitching – multiple orgasm of repeat decoration as near as one comes to the ‘real thing’. Starched rows of lace, ripple and race towards the froth of the ultimate textile ‘money shot’...9

11: Rigidly control, digital lace works, cool and unruffled. Microcosmic secret world of orgiastic and surreal encounters subverting any textile substrate...10

12: Bride and virgin – lace signifying love so overwhelming, tenderness so massive, affection so pure, desire so potent...11

13: ...that it smashes the otherness of ‘the other’ and draws inward the socially peripheral... Oh Jimmy, I love the lace of your bones...12

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7 Fishnets image copyright Ron Johnson and courtesy of Shutterstock.com.
8 Danica Maier Horizontal Rumba 2004-05, lace ribbon and dressmakers pins, 390 x 180 x 2.5 cm.
9 Danica Maier Flowers of Chivalry (series of 3) 2005, Nanduti lace, 60 x 50 cm., 60 x 35 cm., 60 x 45 cm. Made with the help of local lace makers during a residency in Paraguay.
10 Miranda Whall Softly Softly (viewed) 2004.
11 Nan Goldin Cookie and Vittorio’s wedding, New York City 1986, cibachrome 76 x 102 cm (Copyright Nan Goldin, courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York).
14: Madonnas, whores, bridal ‘boy toys’, mothers of gods, our favourite Ciccone-icon (where is she, like a virgin)?

15. Boy toys? Like I said, chaps are for chaps, sweetie...

16: Cultural veils part-masking brides stripped bare – a 15th century Scots Gaelic erotic text and a section of a Presbyterian grandmother’s puritanical stitchery...

17: The crocheted milk jug cover from outback frontier Australia of the 1940s locates a lacy textile as a signifier of a colonialist and impoverished history: the Australian land-form in silhouette and a text of unassailable ownership etched in white-woman’s craft... this is Our Bit, not Your Bit...
18: And then the most beautiful of laceworks...sugar sifted onto public and private spaces...15

19: Here in a rural Scottish kirk where grandparents dance, deconstructing the lacy patterning and weaving their own love-web in space. The memory of this lacework is delicate, but its impact on my retina and my heart is extra to ordinary...16

20: And hand drawn lace inscribed across a modest blushing back to hide nakedness with a web of pretty scripted culture...17

21: The tiny pricks of the lace-maker's work, their relationship to the feminine, the domestic, the fanciful... the tiny spiteful marks as pins pierce and punish, their penetration symbolic of the labour – blood, sweat, tears – that allows the decadence of the decorative...18

22: Debris of humanity, lace trace – decay in the form of dust, of residual traces in derelict spaces – the sweet and intimate deterioration unto death promised by our human condition... 19

23. Lace itself becomes a collection of absence and presence, the holes and gaps as significant as the tissue of intricately entwined fibres... ashes to ashes, dust to dust...20

24:  
   On bridal head...  
   On siren's thigh...  
   On buttered window...  
   In my mind's eye...

   Powerful fabric.

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16 Linda Florence Sugar Floor Dance, Scotland 2005.
17 Andrea Vander Kooij Efflorescence Montreal, April 2005, studio documentation of multi-site performance. Henna on skin, embroidery on linen (photo credit: Kate Fellerath).
18 Danica Maier Horizontal Rumba (detail) 2004-05, lace ribbon and dressmakers pins, 390 x 180 x 2.5 cm.
19 Catherine Bertola Hearth (located in George Stephenson Locomotive Works, Newcastle upon Tyne), 1999, found dust and debris.
20 Catherine Bertola Dust Collection (10 Windsor Ave), 1999, collected household dust, wallpaper, pva glue, gold ink, paper, mdf, braid, 42cm x 55cm x 3cm book with 13 pages.