

Sandra Bridie, b. 1955
The Artist and the Writer
(a fiction)

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Interview between Andrew Preston and Sandra Bridie
September 2002

Andrew Preston: Sandra, can you tell me about the purpose of your residency at Tower Studio?

Sandra Bridie: I have been given a four-week residency at Tower Studio, Queen's College, and my purpose is to use the space as a studio, but also as a living space. I was originally thinking of having an open living space, so that when people walked into the studio they could see my domestic effects. But the previous tenant left this wall up in the centre of the studio, so I have divided the space up into my living space and a studio space. Although Tower Studio is open to the public I didn't want to put on a conventional exhibition – instead I wanted to use it as a workspace, so people could see me producing work. So that is what I have done; in a way you could say that my things and I are the artwork here.

So is this literally living in the space a way of commenting on the relationship between art and life?

I suppose it ends up doing that, but I didn't set out to make a strong statement on that. This work of mine does not intentionally refer to other artists who have done this kind of thing – living in a gallery as a comment on the divide between art and life – rather, this is what I want to do at this moment. The works that I am making here are not the sort that can be put up on the walls as exhibition pieces, that's not how they work. I am here because I want to be in the space and work, so that's what I am doing.

First, could you tell me about the type of work you are doing here? You are doing something, whether you yourself describe it as art or something else – what exactly are you doing while you are here?

I am crocheting rugs. I am sitting down with coloured balls of wool and crocheting squares in a triple stitch, twelve rows to a square, and I am making up many squares. The choice of colours and the modular units are based on the colour square theories and exercises of the Bauhaus teacher Johannes Itten, through his book *The Elements of Color* (American spelling there), which is derived from another book I am using, *The Art of Color*.

Why are you crocheting?

I am crocheting because I got sick of painting, in short. Or, I didn't get sick of painting so much as I got sick of being an artist who exhibited paintings. Up to four or five years ago I was doing OK commercially as a painter, in that I could live in a modest fashion from the paintings I sold. Then I found that that no longer satisfied me for several reasons. I completely gave up (or thought I had given up) being an artist and went back to my training as a nurse. After three years of practising once again as a geriatric nurse, I found myself crocheting. I didn't think of it as art but as a pastime. Then I rediscovered the books of Itten and began making crocheted 'colour square rugs'. I didn't attempt to sell these as I had with my paintings; I gave them away to interested friends

Sorry, what was the question again?

Why crocheting?

Oh, yes, so that's why I am crocheting, because I enjoy doing it and I enjoy giving the rugs to my friends. At Tower Studio, it is a kind of experiment for me, I am seeing if what I am doing here fits into my idea of what art is. Perhaps because this is open to the public I am also interested in finding out if what I am doing here fits into other people's idea of what art could be.

So when and how did you learn how to crochet?

Originally I learnt how to crochet when I was quite young, before I was ten. My grandmother used to look after me quite often when I was young and she would crochet all the time. She taught me how to crochet this stitch when I was about eight or nine years old. Mind you, my ability as a crocheter has not evolved much past this simple stitch.

It mentions here in your biography that your grandmother's death had quite a strong impact on you as well – could you say something about that?

Yes Her death was quite recent and I miss her terribly. Because I had spent so much time as a child with my grandmother – sometimes grandparents can take on a much more benign presence because of their generational distance from their grandchildren – I guess I saw my own grandmother in a very, very rosy light. For me she was only good, I wasn't critical of her at all, and she wasn't critical of me, and it was our choice to be with one another. We didn't resent one another in the way that children sometimes resent a parent for having to make the hard decisions for them. My grandmother lived until she was ninety-five. I would visit her regularly and take her on a holiday with me once a year. In the end, she was living in an old people's home, one I had recommended, but still ... it was heartbreaking to see her demise. So of course I was quite devastated when she died. The strange – or perhaps maybe not so strange when you see the way people make their choices for doing things – the thing about this project at Tower Studio is that it is located opposite Melbourne Cemetery, and that is where my grandmother is buried. So, in a way, without being too romantic or mystical, I feel quite close to her even though she is dead, I feel a tinge of her presence here, and it is comforting, not spooky.

Can you tell me a bit about the process of crocheting and how it compares, for example, to knitting?

I am not a very consummate crocheter; I only know two or three stitches. I don't crochet in a sculptural sense, I can't crochet forms, I can only crochet in two dimensions and then only squares – I could possibly crochet a circle, but have never found the need to do so. So, for me ... crocheting begins at the centre and works outwards and has

corners. And you are only working with one stitch on the hook, so if you lose a stitch you can pick it up and there is no big drama. With knitting, however, I have found that the grief of dropping one stitch usually results in me having to undo the whole thing and go right back to the very beginning because I cannot pick up a whole row. For me, with knitting – I am sure there are many approaches to it – you start at the bottom and work up, whereas, as I said, with crocheting you start in the middle and you work out.

You were describing this to me earlier about crocheting ... I can't remember what term you were using, is it a circle or a ring ... the actual process that you use; you don't do it in a line –

OK, do you want a lesson? You begin with four stitches; you create a loop with the four stitches. Into these four stitches you hook and work into that initial ring outwards in rows. I do triple-stitch, which is possibly just my name for it, three stitches make up one. So, these triple stitches look like little squares. Twelve rows of these make a bigger square.

You mentioned that you rediscovered Itten's book. Could you tell me a bit about what it is about these crocheted patterns that appeals to you, and why you are crocheting a series of them?

Well, initially, when I started crocheting, I used a number of balls of wool my grandmother left when she died, she had this whole stack of balls of wool. I used any colour at random. This stack ran out after I had completed four rugs, so then I began making sequences of colour of my own choice – basic primaries and black and white. I discovered the Bauhaus when I was an art student in the early '80s; this was years after my nursing training. So, when I was crocheting using my own colour choices, I rediscovered in my bookcase the small *Elements of Color*, by Itten. On a purely optical level I was bedazzled by the colours on the pages. So I decided to use these designs to make rugs: a program of works was set before me by looking at this book. As I started making the rugs, my friends became very interested and attracted by this activity.

Crocheting is normally thought of as a craft. Do you think what you are doing can be seen as an art form? Does this matter to you?

There are so many people using stitches of various kinds to make contemporary artworks that this is not a question that needs validating. These people tend to make sculptural objects out of crochet stitches, or knitting, or they are making tapestries or hooking rugs, or making weavings out of various materials. In the '70s craft seemed more distinct from what we think of as 'art'. Craft has more recently been seen in the contemporary art gallery as well as the craft gallery; you see many art objects now that are made using craft-based skills. In a way, what I am doing is returning to a primary function of a craft, which is to create functional objects that are warming and that will last a generation.

These questions also relate to the Bauhaus which, as you said, you learnt about when you went to art school. Could you comment on whether any other aspect of the Bauhaus practice has influenced you?

I suppose there is an aesthetic that appeals to me, from the later Bauhaus in particular. I still enjoy Bauhaus design in functional objects, architecture, theatre design and typography. I see the story of the Bauhaus going from a kind of wacky mysticism in its early period in the early 1920s at Weimar to a more functional, rational and pragmatic program from Dessau Bauhaus onwards. I have enjoyed phases in a few of the Bauhaus teacher's careers: most of Paul Klee's work; phases of Vassily Kandinsky's career, more his early fauvist period, his apocalyptic abstraction and early Bauhaus phases. His later period seems too exemplary of the later Bauhaus teachings – and less interesting for that. László Moholy-Nagy I also enjoy. But I guess I most enjoy the functional design that came out of the Bauhaus: the architecture, pottery, set design, graphics and typesetting, fabric, furniture such as Marcel Breuer's classic chairs and the Bauhaus metalwork.

You mentioned there the mysticism; you do have some quotes by Itten on the wall behind you here, do you take those quotes of his to heart? What sort of a relationship do you have to his notions of spirituality and that sort of thing?

I put his quotes there for fun, really. They strike me as quaintly bombastic, so I guess I have an ironic attitude to these dictums that claim to be stating universal truths. I think perception of colour is a very subjective thing – you may perhaps be able to make certain correlations between one person and another from a similar cultural background, but I don't know about the symbolic or emotional value of colour from one culture to another, or even one historical moment in the one culture to another. I think perception of colour has so much to do with one's personal environment, those moments in a person's history where the incidence of certain colours can associate themselves with an emotional state. From then on, that connection between colour and mood become fused, one might inform the other. Other cultural effects can ascribe symbolic meaning to colour, such as the colour codes of academic or clerical gowns.

To go on, perception of colour has a lot to do with perception of the connection with colour; psychological links between events and colour in the immediate environment where those events occur. As well, there is cultural learning through ritual and education where colour association takes place. Other environmental factors such as climate and its effect on the colours in the landscape also becomes key to the cultural and emotional symbolism of colour. So, back to Mr Itten, his pronouncements strike me personally as quite humorous, but they also lend sense to his books. And in this project they were put up there to acquaint the viewer with my project from another angle other than the task of crocheting. I see the layout of the colour exercises in his books as clear and systematic, which is why they were useful to me as an art student – I did actually learn about colour by executing these exercises. Itten's colour squares are mesmerising and very beautiful, so I wanted the viewer to discover that, also.

Could you tell me what becomes of the rugs once you have made them?

I began making the rugs purely for pleasure and because they filled a function – I needed rugs in my house. Once I began making them, however, the habit stuck with me, and I found it very pleasurable making them. It is possible this became an obsessive activity, something I needed to do. Luckily my friends came along to fuel this obsession; they saw me working on the Itten rugs and started placing orders. So it came to be that I would make a rug for a person and this became a project with its own momentum. Someone requests a rug, they select a colour exercise from one of my two books by Itten; the original *Art of Color*, or the smaller format book derived from this, the *Elements of Color*. I then make the rug for them. I have made thirty rugs to date, from four squares to one hundred and fifty-six squares – this large one was a wedding present and took me months to make. This rug here in blue, red, yellow, black and white is already allocated. The rug I am in the process of making, the blue, yellow and black rug, is based on an exercise in receding and advancing colours, and it is also a commission.

So this is a different approach to art making than previously, when you were painting, selling your works to either private buyers who came to your studio, or through a gallery or through art fairs. Can you talk about why this has changed?

With painting, as I may have already mentioned, very early on I found a commercial gallery to show in, the works appealed to people, so I was lucky for that. Then as the years went by the works I was selling accrued value as they do in galleries. After fifteen or so years, the works acquired so much value that they were beyond what I could afford to spend on a work of art, and therefore beyond the means of my peer group and other friends. The works were being sold to patrons of the arts, basically to people in the upper echelons of society money-wise. I was working very hard to make these paintings, which were painstaking in their rendering, very delicate, even though the subject matter might not suggest this approach – they were paintings and watercolours of electrical and other systems. These plans were designs derived from the microcosmic, tiny transistors to the macro, from domestic housing to office blocks and high rise housing estates

to sewerage plans for the city of Melbourne, and systems conveying electricity from hydro-electricity plants around the state.

So I was working full time as a professional artist, working hard and selling works, but still, overall my income was very meagre. There seemed to me to be this yawning disparity between the people who owned my paintings, and myself and my peers; the paintings seemed to be going to another sector. Also, I was finding that being so singular in my practice – not working in another job to support my art practice – this left things wanting in my life. I felt that I was working without other context, without other reference points to inform both my life and my work. I felt that painting all day in my studio and having exhibitions wasn't enough for me any longer. Remember that before all this I had been a nurse. When all these thoughts surfaced, about practice and content as well as income, I decided take a year out to see what happened. During this hiatus I worked part-time, obtaining work through a nursing agency, which left enough time to study for a Diploma in Gerontology. As you may know, it has become essential for nurses to continually upgrade their skills to keep their jobs, and I had been out of that workplace for several years. After receiving my diploma, I have been working full-time as a nurse again.

Living in the studio and having a residency and so forth – you mentioned that you weren't necessarily interested in what other artists had done in the past with this same idea. But can you see commonalities with feminists and others who were doing 'live-in' residencies and other more autobiographical work in the '70s and '80s?

I wonder whether, in the '70s in particular, it might have been more necessary to define what you were doing as an artist against more conventional practice, as a reaction to such practice. I think this was a time when a lot of big claims and statements were made about the ability of art to create social change. Living in a gallery in the '70s you would have been making such a statement about the material value of the art object. The artist was creating a work, i.e. living in the gallery, that could not be sold, it was thus of no commercial value

in the future either, so they were questioning assumptions about art, life and art's function, including art as commodity. Living in a gallery as 'the artwork' would then have been a radical statement, and as a radical statement it could be assessed in terms of its precedence or lack of it, as well as its premise for the future direction of art.

I wonder, what is the value of 'radical' activity is these days? Today, I suspect there are fewer claims for this, possibly because with the proliferation of artists any opportunities for new, radical stances have been well and truly exhausted. The idea of an avant-garde seems to be more historical and aligned with an idea of modernism and 'progress', concepts that are also exhausted. So, after that meander, my living in the studio here came about out of a combination of pragmatics and desire, rather than the need to make a statement that will alter the way viewers see art functioning in our society. I think those statements have been made, noted and absorbed. I am thus taking up this option, out of personal wants, I suppose, for quite un-radical, even recuperative purposes such as comfort, pleasure, quiet productivity and geniality. People come in here and we have a cup of tea and a chat. I am here so people can watch me working, because I want to be seen making these things.

My next question is – is living in the studio a retreat from the world?

Yes and no. It is not a retreat because I am exposed and not hidden. People are watching me and maybe wondering if what I am doing makes sense or has a purpose. It is a retreat in that I am taking a holiday from my full-time work. And yes, the location of the studio is isolated and remote in terms of the usual gallery circuit, so there are times when there is no-one but me here for up to an hour, even when the doors are open. In the evenings I have been crocheting in bed here watching videos or listening to music, so I suppose that is not 'out there', so to speak. My time spent here on this residency is in fact my four weeks' annual leave. I decided to use this studio time as a break and to produce more rugs with an audience, and perhaps to reclaim my art practice in some way, some new way. That said, I am not assessing how successful this is in any concrete way.

What about more contemporary artists – I am thinking of people like Tracy Emin and Sophie Calle – how do you compare yourself with those artists?

Well, for one, I am not trying to make a radical statement about my life, I am not crocheting the names of all the women or men I have slept with like Tracy Emin might do if she could crochet! I don't know enough about Sophie Calle; I have only seen one publication on/by her, where she seemed to stalk people in the name of her art. So I am not being voyeuristic, making art out of intrusive practices. This is very self-contained. It is almost what you might call an 'ambient, live-in performance'. In terms of performance and statement all I am doing is crochet. It is hardly diaristic, in that I am not divulging much about my personal life to the audience – even in this interview I am not doing that. So I am not making any angry or self-revelatory statements, even though the viewer is present in my temporary living environment and I am present making work. I think both those artists are interesting, but my statement is more contemplative and still, like a *tableau vivant*. What people are witnessing when they visit the studio is like the calm air of a painting by Johannes Vermeer, or a genre painting of a banal scene titled *Woman Crocheting*. I like to think that the beautiful light in this studio imbues the image that viewers see in the studio with these pictorial references.

These works you are doing now obviously have functional elements. What do you think of the role of art generally, do you think it should have a functional aspect?

Not necessarily, no, but then, any question about art, to me, is perplexing. Art doesn't begin or end. I enjoy having things around me that I take visual pleasure in, and I suppose I think of them as artworks. But this includes many, many things, such as crafted objects; functional objects such as cookware and garden tools; works designated as 'art' such as reproductions of artworks and works by peers I have either bought or swapped. I enjoy going to exhibitions, looking at architecture, doing the grand tour of galleries in Europe, etc. But I also enjoy so many things on a similar level that it is very hard for me to distinguish between them. In another way, to look at a crafted or mass produced functional object as 'art' requires so much

hard work, you begin framing the object as art, contextualising it within a lineage of similar aesthetic objects, isolating its form from its function, intellectualising its context and properties. That's too much work to do all the time, it's fatiguing. So I would rather just take visual pleasure in things without the question of whether they are works of art. Of course, I still acknowledge the programs of 'great' artists, but I also appreciate, and give the same value to, the programs of those who set out to produce functional and pleasing objects.

What about the relationship between content and form, can you say something about your views on that?

I think I need to hear from you what your views are, what do you think content and form are?

I am not sure if there is a difference, if they are distinguishable. What do you think content is, and what do you think form is? Is there any content in these things you are crocheting?

[Pause] I am not thinking of content when I make these rugs – I just make them. I do not think this activity fits into any intellectual design or conceptual premise. This activity could be intentionally denying all that; does that sound dumb? Perhaps throwing all those preconceptions up for question is part of the content of the works. By emptying them out of the need to stand as artworks ... but then again, these rugs are referencing a period of art, exercises in colour by a Bauhaus master, so perhaps they become artworks purely by that association. In a roundabout way, this project was set up to throw these questions up for conjecture: perhaps there you have its content. Its form is the woollen rug; step back further than that, its form is the residency where I am living in the studio, making rugs.

Does your work have any relation to questions that were asked in the '80s about appropriation and second-degree art – postmodern art? I am thinking of someone like John Nixon who took a project from the past, and continued it; are you doing something like that?

Well, I suppose this is a classic act of appropriation, working ‘after’ Itten. The designs have already been made, and I am merely re-rendering them in a medium not specified in the instruction manuals.

I guess the idea of beauty in art is quite a classical one as well. How important do you think beauty in art is? Do you consider your work here to be beautiful?

Beauty is sometimes useful, sometimes not. It is not essential for me – but, then again, beauty is a pretty broad and subjectively defined quality. I enjoy making the rugs and looking at the colours. I enjoy doing the single squares because of the pure colour and the effect of that colour. I enjoy combining the colours because of the resonances and optical play that creates. I enjoy the quietness of the work, the fact that it is almost silent, because there is only one needle used and not two needles, so no ‘clacking’ to interfere with one’s thoughts. There are many experiences here in this work that I find very beautiful and pleasurable. For me this work is beautiful both visually and as an experience; this room is very beautiful too. But here, beauty was not a criterion I set myself in making the work, and perhaps the word ‘pleasant’ could easily be substituted in many instances. This work does not take me to a higher realm.

You mentioned before that you don’t see yourself as hugely competent as a crocheter, that you only know a couple of stitches rather than all of them. So what about competency in art? There is also a classical notion that great art comes from great artists and those aesthetic qualities come from technique. I realise this has been questioned throughout modernism and in postmodernism perhaps even more so. So how important is skill and competency in art for you?

I certainly appreciate it when I see it. But I can also see when people get stuck with their competency and facility and lose sight of the conceptual premise of their work – or do not even consider that. They are concentrating so much on rendering, on what they are good at, and let other areas suffer. I found in my paintings it was easy to get stuck there and it involved an effort of will to push the works out of that comfort zone of technique. Some might say I never got out! Today artists can be dilettantes, they jump from one skill

to another acquiring expertise in a small area specific to the work, or else they hire others to execute their ideas for them. With some artists, it's their design and ideas and adaptability that you assess their ability on. I am not claiming in the least to be making great art, these are not great crafted objects; they are very crude, in fact. I do not want to enter a discussion on how to grade this work – it all depends on what you value.

From that then, you were and still are a skilled painter. Does this work have similarities with your paintings for you? Do you see this work as a continuation or as a complete break?

I suppose in my paintings there was an architectonic, formal use of space, very much adhering to the shape of the canvas or paper. They were very formal works even though they were representational, or schematically representational. These were the paintings of mine that people compared to Fernand Léger in their combination of abstract and representational qualities. I suppose the modular basis of these rugs goes back to that. I suppose that is where, as far a design goes, these pieces may be wanting. The square is used in such a repetitive fashion. I am not sure if I could incorporate the qualities I enjoyed in my paintings into these rugs; I would need to find another form to do that.

Could you tell me a bit about how you make the rugs, how long it takes, how much it costs, that sort of thing?

The length of an 8 ply, 50g ball of wool determines the size of the crocheted squares. So how long is a ball of wool? Twelve rows in this case, or almost twelve. This seems like a magical number for me. The sizes of the rugs are determined by the breakdown of an Itten design. Often enough the design is clearly divided into rows of squares; say, 5 x 5, or 5 x 6, but some of the designs have required me tracing them and working out a breakdown, because this is not evident in the reproduction. The current rug I am making at Tower Studio is 4 x 6, and there is also a border around that.

When I first bought the wool (the only place I could find to buy it in the city was Lindcraft), the balls of wool cost either \$4.00 or \$6.50, and there was a very limited range of colours. This meant that a rug would cost over \$100.00 to make. I then began to shop around, using the Internet and the Yellow Pages. I had to search hard because there are no longer many wool shops left in inner Melbourne compared to a decade ago. Any conversation with a knitter or crocheter will confirm this view. So I went on a few expeditions to shops that had shut down just recently. With those still open it is hard to get the range of colours that was available years ago.

I suppose you might be aware that some people might think that what you are doing is 'wanky' and silly and not real art, and a waste of time and money. How would you respond to these comments?

I cannot really justify what I am doing to those who think it's a waste of time. It's a matter of what people take away from this. This is not to say that I am not responsible for setting this project up, or that I am leaving it to the viewer to receive what they like from my work without having my own intentions for it. I suppose I am responsible for setting up a few questions for visitors to take away with them, and perhaps they will battle with those questions. I see myself as doing this to occupy myself in a restful pursuit, but also as an opportunity for the audience to enjoy the space with me. I would like them to slow down, think about the pleasure of practice – those contemplative aspects of practice as a reflective space, rather than a highly charged and competitive space. I guess the viewers can ask themselves if that is enough. For some the answer will doubtless be no, perhaps for others they will see some value in it.

What about the residency as a kind of art form? Do you see it as this and is it something you would do again?

It's a funny thing, because before now I have not presented any work beyond the framed work on the wall. This residency brings in a whole other dimension, or two other dimensions to my work: time and space. I will probably need some time away from this experience

to reflect on its impact, and work out if that is an area I wish to enter into more fully in the future. I suspect, though, I will not be doing much more crochet, but I will be resuming my art practice in some form, though not full-time. I can't see any value or pleasure in isolating myself in art; I enjoy my other work as a nurse too much to let go of it again.

Can you tell me more about who you give your rugs to, and what stimulates you or motivates you to give so much of your time making a rug for that person?

In a way, the rugs are commissioned by people who want them. There is no point in making a rug for someone who hasn't requested it, because making the rugs involves a lot of effort and a lot of expenditure on my part. Many of my artist friends have requested the Itten rugs who also enjoy the books of Itten or else have discovered him through the rugs and my books. One or two rugs have been made as presents unseen, but this has been for people that I am sure will enjoy them. I need to know that the size of my gesture will be equal to the scale of enjoyment or appreciation on receiving the rugs because of the time and energy I am investing in making the rugs.

You wanted to know if the rugs were commissions or gifts, and what is the difference? If people want to pay for the wool I am happy to make the rugs with that payment; the gifts where I pay for the wool are for occasions such as weddings or special anniversaries. Perhaps half of the rugs I have made have been gifts, and with the other half, people have paid for the wool.

But you don't actually make a profit; people are just giving you the money for the wool?

Yes, I am not adding my commission on top of that.

What about the role of women in art? I mentioned before that this practice of living in galleries has been particularly identified with women and more autobiographical work – but what about women in the Bauhaus, for example? Also, could you comment on the fact that this project of living in the gallery is being done by you, a woman?

Yes, in the Bauhaus school of art and design there was a hierarchy of values for the workshops they had there. So even though women as well as men could be accepted into the Bauhaus under the Weimar Constitution, the women only found entry into workshops such as ceramics, metalwork, printing and textiles, and very few ended up teaching there. The founders of the Bauhaus such as Walter Gropius valued architecture above all other workshops, and women were not permitted entry into that. Of course, this project of mine at Tower Studio is informed by feminist practice but I can't be more helpful on your question than that. Through Itten you have a Bauhaus master setting up the designs and exercises for these works. So I am appropriating his form in a supposedly 'women's medium'. This seems to be going backwards rather than forwards, I guess, but only if you accept very narrow and obsolete definitions of what is 'women's work' and what is 'men's work'. I suppose feminism has been commenting on concepts of supremacy, progress, avant-garde, excellence, unique focus – and I suppose my work here runs counter to several of those values.

What about notions of art and craft? You mentioned that crocheting is very much a part of local contemporary practice by some artists, especially – as you said – for three-dimensional works. Is there any contradiction between art and craft, or do you think that the definition of art now includes craft, as well as many other practices that may not have been considered 'art' once upon a time?

I guess I see it all as skill. Some people are more skilled, some people less skilled, some work is aesthetically more or less pleasing to me, some artists seem to be confused in what they are trying to say. I make value judgements like anybody else and mine are made according to an idea of rigour, what principles are being adhered to, what is being defined. I think that if you look at any practice then similar skills are being applied. I try not to give a hierarchy of values to these things, but like anybody else I fall into those traps.

Well, in that case, is there anything that isn't art?

[Pause] I have been asked this question several times, and I am always unable to answer it. I think there are things that are, and there are things that are not art, but I don't know if that is a useful way of looking at the matter.

In that case, is it all purely subjective – or are there any objective statements one can make about aesthetic qualities or aesthetic values?

Very subjective, but of course one thing has a higher value to another according to my need to either apply rules or subscribe to rules. But in the end who is to say that I am right and that someone else is wrong?

How does your day pan out, then, seeing that the studio is only open three days; what happens during the other days you are there?

Well I am not trapped in the tower; I am not imprisoned. So even though when the doors are open to the public I am sitting here on this spot crocheting, I do get out. I am mainly limiting myself to this part of the city, to Carlton and Parkville because I think my activity needs to be contained for some reason, I feel that is part of the residency. I am very much enjoying living in the studio. I suppose I would wake up at about 7.00am, have breakfast, shower and then read for a bit. I am limiting my activities to shopping and walking on the days the studio is open. On Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays I come back to the studio at about 12 noon, have lunch and then prepare for opening the studio. In the evenings I am usually on my own, but I have had friends around for dinner on occasion – we are particularly enjoying the roof here, this place is so wonderful at dusk when light dims. On the weekends, and Mondays and Tuesdays, that is when I might go on excursions or else go on long walks around this area. So far I have been to see *The Italians* at the Melbourne Museum and also *Space Station* at the Imax theatre there. I have been to the Ian Potter Museum of Art at Melbourne University several times. So my activity is very localised.

Even though you have people around and you go out it is quite solitary – do you enjoy that aspect of it?

For this month, when I have been working full-time up until now, I am enjoying the placed-ness of my residency here. I have prepared for it, so staying within bounds is part of the work. It is satisfying to investigate a limited area. I will be looking forward to venturing further out, to trips in the country, etc. when this residency is finished.

Thank you Sandra.

photo/text #1

**the artist goes
shopping for
wool**

by andrew preston

photo/text #1: the artist goes shopping for wool, by andrew preston

Sandra Bridie and Andrew Preston

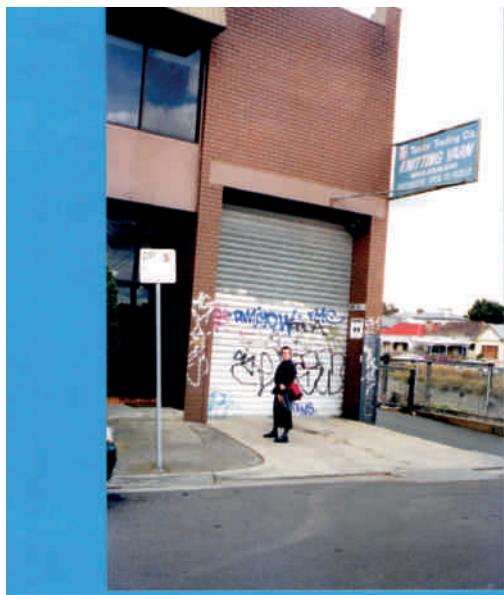
6 page A4 booklet, pasted text and colour photos on paper, 2002



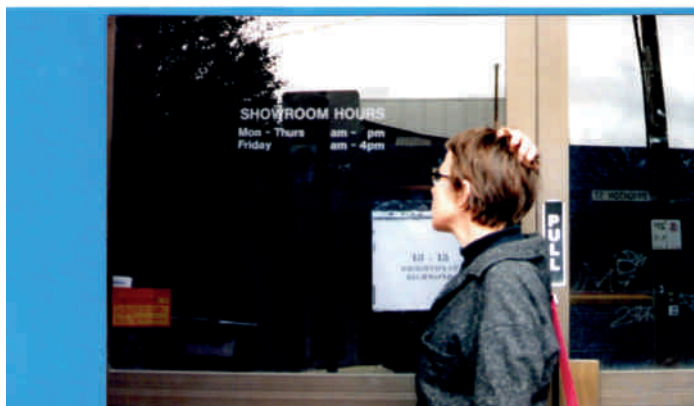
It is not easy to buy wool anymore. We are no longer a nation of knitters and crocheters, unlike previous generations. People find it easier to buy a jumper or rug than knit one. But perhaps purchased knitwear doesn't provide as much pleasure, or even last as long, as a home-made item.



Sandra's attempts to buy wool took her to Richmond, Hampton and Malvern. For her previous rug she had been to Lincraft in the city, but the wool had been quite expensive and she had decided to investigate other options. Some of these she heard about from friends, others she found in the Yellow Pages.



Sandra first visited a Taxtor Trading Co, a factory outlet in Richmond, which she had heard sold very cheap wool. Unfortunately, when she got there she found that the premises were no longer open.





Next, she went to The Wool Shop in Hampton, which had a good range of wool. The sales assistant was also very helpful. At this shop she was able to buy the blue wool she needed, but they didn't have a yellow colour close enough to the one she needed.





There were two shops in Malvern that Sandra could try. The first, Wondoflex Yarn Craft Centre, was a large store but she couldn't find the right yellow colour there either.





At Spotlight in Malvern, she at last found the yellow wool she wanted, and also at a reasonable price. She would return here again, she decided.



photo/text #3

**the artist in the
tower**

by andrew preston

photo/text #3: the artist in the tower, by andrew preston

Sandra Bridie and Andrew Preston

7 page A4 booklet, pasted text and colour photos on paper, 2002

The artist, Sandra Bridie is living in Tower Studio for the month of September. She will use one half of the studio to live in. Although it looks quite bare, Sandra is comfortable in her new surroundings. She can read, and cook, and enjoy the Spring sunshine that beams through the windows all day long.



Sandra enjoys reading fiction, on this occasion it is the Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa's work, *The Book of Disquiet*.





The roof of Queen's College, just above Tower Studio, affords a wonderful view of the city.



When the studio is open to the public, Sandra moves to the other half of the studio to sit and crochet. When people visit the studio, Sandra is happy to talk to them about the rugs she is making.



The artist, Sandra Bridie, goes for her daily walk around the Melbourne General Cemetery and Princes Park.





She can see Tower Studio from certain vantage points along the walk.



Sandra takes the opportunity to take in the sun in Princes Park.



