

Reviewed by *Lycia Trouton*

**5th biennale internationale du
lin de Portneuf (BILP)
Various Locations**

Held in the Portneuf flax-growing region of southern Quebec, the *5th biennale internationale du lin de Portneuf (BILP)* took place in historic towns along the picturesque Saint Lawrence river from June 15–September 29, 2013. The *BILP*, sponsored by Canada’s national and provincial Arts Councils, has become known for exploring broadly expressive and conceptual possibilities of flax and linen.

There is a particular curatorial emphasis for each biennial, with links to the Montreal art scene as well as the international arena. Quebecoise community building seems to be an additional aspect of the biennial’s cultural heritage mission, with a “flax-pulling fete” on one day during the three-month exhibition.

Curator Carole Baillargeon, known for her advocacy of Quebec’s impact on the international visual arts, crafts, and design scene, chose to interpret *The Family* system as a theme. This challenge was handled well in her choice of artists and their words. The Family was categorized into three parts—*Spirit, Traits*, and *Heirloom*—with the latter held at a restored 1800 mill, a venue that fully complemented the artworks.

Family Heirloom included the stunning room-sized *Spinning Jenny* installation by



AGANETHA DYCK *Walking Closets #2* Coat hangers, paper, linen fabric and other fibers, beeswax, plexi-glass pole, collaboration with actual bees for honeycomb production, 39.37" x 26.25', 2012.

All Photos by Denis Baribault.

Ontario’s Noëlle Hamlyn. Three wooden divider walls constructed out of salt-encrusted spools surrounded a central spinning wheel covered in sparkling crystals. The result looked like cargo from a recently salvaged shipwreck. The feeling of a flood of frozen tears or sweat seemed to mingle with memories of toil and the daily grind of the home-based cottage textile industry. Hong Kong/British artist Nora Fok showed the same preciousness and intensity with natural fibers

that she is known for with her nylon microfilament artwork. For *LINLON*, she created nearly a dozen tiny works using her own hand-grown flax.

The Museum of Civilization in Quebec (co-sponsor of the Biennial) awarded two artists a grant and the placement of their *Family Heirloom* work in the permanent collection. Lithuanian Severija Incirauskaitė-Kriaunevicienė, known for her stitched imagery on found objects, describes her approach as “tuning”

NOËLLE HAMLYN *Spinning Jenny* Flax paper yarn, salt and salt crystals, spinning wheel (circa 1890), 400 bobbins, wooden and metal items dipped in salt solution, 11.5' x 18', dimensions variable, 2013.





Family Trait BILP exhibition view at Caserne du lin in Saint-Léonard de Portneuf, Canada. On the far wall is FRANCE GONEAU's diptych *Freckles* (sandstone, underglaze, waxed linen thread, ceramic, 39.37" x 59", 2012).

our questions about male/female labor and aesthetic concerns. Her piece *One Direction* features a cross-stitched pattern of flowers inserted into the metal blade of a rusted spade. Montreal-based Barbara Wisnoski was also chosen for this prestigious award for *Ruisseau (Stream)*. This sprawling wall-sized piece, made with hundreds of small squares of recycled Ukrainian family clothing, represents the river of life as well as the process of retting flax.

Walking Closets by Aganetha Dyck was featured in *Family Spirit*. Her hybrid sculptures, made in collaboration with live bees, contain an alien form of lace edgework "drawn" in honeycomb. The indirect result is a refocusing of the viewer's attention on the alarming decline of the bee population making recent headlines around the world. The Manitoba-based Dyck has been recognized with several awards for this "practiced visual arts research" work.

The *Family Trait* section presented new approaches from applied arts to architecture, all hybrid in terms of craftsmanship, creative processes, and concepts. The artists confronted questions about the juxtaposition between uniformity and interbreeding, and their sense of ease with individual family legacies. The work could be said to reference anthropological studies of *familism* (subordinating individual goals for family needs and values); concepts of kinship or ethnicity spoke to contentious areas of socio-politics. France Goneau's *Freckles* is an inventive red dress



NORA FOK Project LINLON Detail, flax seeds, flax pods, natural and dyed Galway linen, pearls, glass beads, nylon, monofilament, polypropylene, other polymers, 11 pieces of jewelry, dimensions variable, 2012.

diptych made of sandstone medallions and waxed linen thread, a creative rendering of the fragmented self in an era of a world-gone-mad within the homogeneousness of globalization.

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