



Press Release

Local Icon finds common ground with Taranaki Legend

The latest exhibition at Hawke's Bay Museum and Art Gallery forges an unexpected relationship between the communities of Hawke's Bay and Taranaki. *Idle hands are the devils workshop* brings one of the great treasures of the Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust collection, the stamp banners of Mrs Lilla Esam, together with a remarkable collection of quilts made by Taranaki's Mr Fred Butler.

These two individuals were not known to one another, nor did their practice the same craft. However they are united by a commitment – some would say an obsession – to their remarkable collections.

Mrs Lilla Esam created her stamp banners at her home in Hastings around the mid 1920s. She had a passion for stamp collecting, however rather than compiling the usual album Lilla patiently attached her stamps to large linen banners creating mosaics that reflected scenes from her avid imagination.

Fred Butler's life was equally consumed by his own collection. Quilting was one of the ways that Fred reassembled elements he had collected – in this case fabric – into objects that could accompany him through his life. Made from as early as 1914, with a number created in the 1930's through to the 1960's, many of these works meander away from handcraft conventions and have more in common with the groundbreaking abstract art of the same time.

Idle hands are the devils workshop talks about a time when great efforts were made to keep idle fingers busy and find a use for each stamp or scrap of fabric. These are two remarkable collections, and it is with great pleasure that the Hawke's Bay Museum and Art Gallery presents them for display.

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HAWKE'S BAY **MUSEUM & ART GALLERY** NAPIER
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above: Fred Butler
Quilt
Crazy patchwork
Machine stitched, herringbone
top stitching

right: Lilla Esam
Chinese Woman (detail)
Postage stamps on linen

