CECILIA HEFFER
Commissioned textile design for
Government House, Sydney.
2009 | Historic Houses Trust

The project was part of the Historic Houses Trust ‘To Furnish a Future Program’, a five-year refurbishment plan to redesign the interior of Government House, Sydney, 2002-2007. I was commissioned to design a contemporary lace curtain for the State Rooms. Throughout a three-year interview period I presented new concepts and methodologies for the lace curtain – to a series of judging panels consisting of leading architects, historians, curators and design experts.

This work is part of ongoing research-by-design investigation into the possibilities of contemporary lace. New production techniques, the possibilities of digital imagery and non-traditional imagery are explored in the context of the unique openwork structure of lace. The motivation behind these projects is to bring the qualities of lace into the world of modern textiles, fashion, interior design and architecture. These investigations combine technical and aesthetic innovation.

The significance of this research is that it stands alone in its field and has created an original Australian lace innovation; one that is unique to our culture and times. It breaks away from the traditional European floral motif normally associated with lace design. It references botanical illustrations specific to NSW and, in particular, the work of the Scott sisters who left a plethora of botanical illustrations in the 1900s. The scale, composition and repeat of the design completely breaks away from the high decorative style associated with traditional lace design, giving it a uniquely Australian aesthetic of light, space and scale.
Commissioned textile design for Government House, Sydney

Final design for lace production.
Half drop repeat. Lace produced by: Morton, Borland and Young, Scotland.
CECILIA HEFFER
Commissioned textile design
for Government House,
Sydney
200904886
Original creative work

Top to bottom.

Detail of weaving process: pattern woven as Nottingham Lace on a 100
dears old loom (Production: Morton, Borland and Young, Scotland)
CECILIA HEFFER
Commissioned textile design for Government House, Sydney

2009004886
Original creative work

Top to bottom.

Inspection process during production
CECILIA HEFFER
Commissioned textile design
for Government House,
Sydney
2009

Original creative work

An article appeared through
Article in Vogue Living

ORDER IN THE HOUSE
CECILIA HEFFER
Commissioned textile design for Government House, Sydney

2009004886
Original creative work

To Furnish a Future

The Refurbishment of the State Drawing Rooms, Government House, Sydney

In 1996 Bob Carr, who was Premier of NSW at the time, decided to renovate the private recording rooms of Government House and to transfer its management to the professional estate and museum agency, the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales. This brought about a number of fundamental changes to how the former residence was to be used, including more opportunities for public access to guided tours, education and public programs and a variety of community functions. Today Government House remains very much a “working historic house” as the House is used to host an extensive program of Vice-Regal and State Government ceremonies and hospitality functions.

Ann Toy, the Trust’s Supervising Curator at Government House, recently played a major role in the most significant refurbishment of this house in twenty-three years. One prominent aspect has been bringing the drawing rooms of the State Drawing Room into the present day world through the commissioning of contemporary designed furniture, bar, upholstery, carpet and other furnishing treatments to complement and supplement the integrity of the historic interior and their collections.

The project’s refurbishment was long overdue as the existing furnishings were installed in the mid-1990s. Guiding the restoration and refurbishment of the State Rooms was the To Furnish a Future policy developed by the Trust. This ambitious refurbishment was funded by the NSW State Government.