

Simone Merry 1906 – 2005

Written by **Gina Woodhill**, Simone Merry's eldest granddaughter. Gina spent many precious times with Simone as a little girl.

Simone Merry, born in 1906, liked to paint in colours with thread. Her work reflects an inspired whimsy that informed her life even when life in itself was hanging by a thread. She would tell the story, of when on the operating table as a young woman, she heard the surgical nurse tell the doctor, 'she won't make it'. Simone's response, as she would tell us, was to be conscious enough, 'to think to myself, I will show you' and in that moment chose to survive. Perhaps it was that close moment with death that allowed her to have a generally joyful approach to life, exhibited in the rich colours and humorous work she created.

Simone also had a deep yearning to contextualise the misfortunes of others and the tragic events she witnessed through the news and as part of her life experience. From the shell shock of her brother – WWI pilot – to the horror of local bushfires around her home in Sydney, Simone Merry bore witness through needle and thread to life and humanity's attempt to understand it: even to the extent of creating religious works that were entered and won in the Blake Prize.

The tapestry of Simone Merry would be incomplete without speaking of her other great passion, music. It is evident in the musical themes woven into her embroideries, sometimes as a singular subject, at other times as an underlying theme giving nuance. She was a talented violinist, and it could be said that she was either fiddling or stitching her whole life. As her family, we adored these qualities in her, and she left a legacy of colour, music and skill that her great grandchildren continue to benefit from.