Hi Melanie, This book sounds intriguing! There are actually two copies in the libraries around my state, so I put a hold on a copy.

Just looking at the cover - I find it amazing that somebody could do this in thread, when they have not spent years practising, having the odd class,
and just generally being immersed in thread activities.

Which I guess, just goes to show that there are people who just 'see' what has to be done to capture the Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske of movement and the environment. You can see the the water moving, imagine the sandy shore with the lumps and bumps and a worm track through it. I struggle to even 'copy' such works with very clear instructions but to do a design of my own I can't imagine. Any tapestry I have attempted have been with lots of directions. Obviously the skills of painting, to a skilled artist, are very similar to drawing with thread, and it is still possible to get a bit of Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske fluid appearance.

I will look forward to reading his story. What a lovely way to start a Saturday morning - a cup of coffee and Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske book review!

Glad it interests you! Yes, he seemed to be a natural -- took his painting and just translated it right into thread. Apparently his wife taught him the basics. This biography is bits of him interspersed with other essay bits but I hope you will enjoy the free form of it. I found it fascinating. This sounds like a very interesting read. Thanks for the recommendation, Melanie. I am still slowly reading this book. It is a 'slow' book, not a fast read and a lot to take in. It intrigues me a book can be published with so little actual information about somebody who is not all that well known.

And yet, here in Tasmania, in my local library there are two copies!! There aren't even two copies of best sellers most of the time. But I am enjoying it. Yes, isn't it interesting that there is this whole book about a person whose life could probably have been contained in a pamphlet? I was fascinated by how she put this together. Amazing that there were two copies in your library - none in mine, I had to interloan it!

Share your Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske, ideas or suggestions here -- I am always interested in hearing from readers. It's nice to have a conversation! I first heard Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske this book in the bibliography of a craft book I was studying, and thought it sounded intriguing Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske to track down via Interlibrary Loan. It delivered, though not in the way I was first expecting.

It is a delicate biography, mostly because it isn't one at all. The author decides to write about this intriguing character, John Craske b, d but finds that there isn't all that much to discover. The book is about more than Craske himself; it's also about her search for him -- the places she goes to do her research, the people she encounters along the way, related to Craske or not, and her own life story is inextricably linked to the narrative, as her husband dies during the course of her writing this book.

It is fascinating and absorbing reading. John Craske himself, the backbone of the book, was an English fisherman from Norfolk who suffered from an undiagnosed disease they think now it may have been some kind of diabetes.

He would fall into long periods of invalidism, in which he seemed not to be in the world at all. His wife encouraged him to paint in order to engage with the world, and feel as if he was on the open seas again, which he missed.

Visitors noted that all the surfaces of their house were covered with paintings propped up, and even painted right onto the doors and windowsills. When John became too ill to be able to paint, his wife set him onto embroidery, which he could do from his bed.

His embroideries were fresh and unique; he used his painting techniques to make embroidered images of the seascapes he loved. As a stitcher myself I could see how these were unusual for the time, being freeform and individual. He uses his wools and threads to indicate wind, waves, grasses, and more; the movement in his stitching is extraordinary.

He was working on a huge panel depicting Dunkirk when he died, leaving only a square of the sky undone. Blackburn examines not only his life history and the ways in which he turned to painting and then embroidery, but also what happened to his works after he'd died, and the ways in which his reputation was both made and forgotten. Integral to his brief Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske were the writers Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland, who discovered him in his small village, and championed his art after that -- partly out of admiration and partly out of a feeling that he and his wife really needed some financial support.

Blackburn also visits a couple of small regional museums and institutions that hold Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske few of Craske's remaining works, finding them poorly stored, not exhibited, or shown a lot of care. They seem to treat them as the output of a local artisan, not worth too much attention. I hope that this book can at least inspire those places to preserve Craske's work for the future; they are original, with a individual viewpoint. The book as a whole feels wild and windy, with a lot of open spaces to think and ponder.

One of the things John Craske said about being out on the ocean in a small boat was that it made you feel like a small bit of the world; this book's wide-ranging interest and narrative structure also makes you, the reader, feel like one small point in a huge tapestry of life.

This was a wonderful, rambling discovery. Labels: book reviewbooksembroideryreadingText Talk. Sara April 13, at PM. Melwyk April 29, at AM. Anonymous April 15, at PM. Sara May 14, at AM. Melwyk June 9, at PM. Newer Post Older Post Home. Subscribe to: Post Comments Atom.

**Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske by Julia Blackburn**

It is said Craske worked with the intensity of someone speaking under oath. Outsider artists are fascinating. They lack training and connections, and are often only Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske by chance. He was born into a fishing family in Norfolk and, after a spell at sea, became a fishmonger.

Soon after enlisting in the Army during the Great War, he contracted a strange illness and became lost in mental stupors for weeks and months at a
time. After confinement in an asylum he was released into the care of his wife, Laura. His attempts to resume work failed and the only palliative for his condition was long spells in proximity to the sea.

Craske turned to painting and tapestry, invariably depicting boats. He was discovered in by the Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske Valentine Ackland and had a brief period of fashionable success, but afterwards he was largely forgotten.

Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske Blackburn is also something of an outsider. Her approach is very personal and a long way from academic. She recounts her visits to archives and interviews with locals, interspersed with stories about herself and her friends. There are longueurs, but on the whole Blackburn is an engaging enough raconteur and her digressions — covering topics ranging from to Einstein to the Elephant Man - do sometimes help to recreate Craske and his world. This is a major omission in the book.

When tourists started arriving in their villages, the oilskin-clad, sea-booted fisherman appeared alien to them, and their sea-faring lifestyle extraordinary. When tragedy strikes her the solution is the same as it was for her subject, a prolonged immersion in work.

As for Craske, the puzzle of his illness remains unsolved, though Blackburn certainly tries hard enough. This wonderfully eccentric biography paints vivid pictures of both artist and biographer.

As a bonus, Blackburn is helping to organise a Craske retrospective in Norwich in May. Already have an account? Log in here. Independent Premium Comments can be posted by members of our membership scheme, Independent Premium. It allows our most engaged readers to debate the big issues, share their own experiences, discuss real-world solutions, and more. Our journalists will try to respond by joining the threads Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske they can to create a true meeting of independent Premium.

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Goodreads helps you keep track of books you want to read. Want to Read saving…. Want to Read Currently Reading Read. Other editions. Enlarge cover. Error rating book. Refresh and try again. Open Preview See a Problem? Details if other :. Thanks for telling us about the problem. Return to Book Page. Preview — Threads by Julia Blackburn. John Craske, a Norfolk fisherman, was born in and inwhen he had just turned thirty-six, he fell seriously ill.

In he started making paintings of the sea and Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske and the coastline seen from the sea, and later, when he was too ill to stand and paint, he turned t John Craske, a Norfolk fisherman, was born in and inwhen he had just turned thirty-six, he fell seriously ill.

In he started making paintings of the sea and Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske and the coastline seen from the sea, and later, when he was too ill to stand and paint, he turned to embroidery, which he could do lying in bed. His embroideries were also the sea, including his masterpiece, a huge embroidery of The Evacuation of Dunkirk.

Very few facts about Craske are known, and only a few scattered photographs have survived, together with accounts by the writer Sylvia Townsend Warner and her lover Valentine Ackland, who discovered Craske in Threads: a book about life and death and the strange country between the two where John Craske seemed to live. Get A Copy. Hardcoverpages. More Details Original Title. Other Editions 4. Friend Reviews. To see what your friends thought of this book, please sign up.

To ask other readers questions about Threadsplease sign up. Lists with This Book. This book is not yet featured on Listopia. Community Reviews. Showing Average rating 4. Rating details. More filters. Sort order. Jun 08, Ingrid rated it it was amazing. Never heard about John Craske, but I will never forget him now! Beautifully written, I can almost smell the sea and see the emptiness and beautiful skies of Norfolk. And I see John and Laura Craske, he delicate and vulnerable, she determined.

The book is also about the life of author Julia Blackburn and a little surprisingly about Einstein. A book to read again. View all 7 comments. Jan 03, Penny rated it it was amazing Shelves: biography. Goodness, this was excellent- a strange, haunting book that I kept thinking about even when I wasn't reading it. Julia Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske tells the story of John Craske, a Norfolk fisherman born in He first went to sea aged 11, but in he became ill doing army training.
From this time until his death in he suffered bouts of extreme but sometimes puzzling ill health. The actual ailments are never properly diagnosed. Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske this is a 'thread' that Blackburn pursues. He certainly had diabetes. Goodness, this was excellent - a strange, haunting book that I kept thinking about even when I wasn't reading it. He certainly had diabetes but for years he also went in and out of a 'stuporous state'. Clearly there are complex mental issues here as well as physical ones.

Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske the love and devotion of his wife Laura he would have no doubt been Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske. During Craske's more lucid periods he would paint and embroider - and many of his works are beautifully presented in the book, which is printed on glossy, premium paper.

Whilst Blackburn was working on her book she was also dealing with the declining health of her beloved husband Herman. So as well as learning about Craske we have, interwoven inextricably into the pages, Blackburn's emotions knowing that Herman will be leaving her for ever very soon. Threads is a perfect title. As Blackburn says, she saw her book - "in terms of an embroidered tapestry and that made it possible for me to jump to different sections and fill them in".

At the end of I read a number of newspaper Book Reviews of the Year, and Threads cropped up many times as a star read. It was already on my radar and I've read other work by Blackburn but it still surprised me as just how very good it was. Highly recommended. Nov 28, Marie rated it it was amazing. This was a gem. Those who know me will know that I am not one to sprinkle five-star appraisals in the direction of every other book I happen to have come into contact with.

I am no wide-eyed jejune enthusiast of anyone and everyone who's ever set pen to paper. Books are repositories of potential riches — of knowledge, sagacity, or imagination — Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske is a great deal to live up to, so when individual works don't deliver their fair share of that promise, which all books carry by default, there is This was a gem.

Books are repositories of potential riches — of knowledge, sagacity, or imagination — which is a great deal to live up to, so when individual works don't deliver their fair share of that promise, which all books carry by default, there is no need to fall over oneself. But this book does. Deliver its fair share of that promise, that is.

And yet it is at times difficult to pinpoint in what way it does this. It purports to be a biography of John Craske, a Norfolk fisherman who was bedridden or otherwise poorly for much of his adult life, and who passed the time by "going to sea in his head" and embroidering a great number of scenes of sea-life from memory.

And while it does attend to Craske, sort of, in a piecemeal, halting, juddering sort of way, the information available is simply not that plentiful and what there is of it isn't always very exciting or impressive. So in order to put together a book on him, Blackburn interweaves the story Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske his life and work with parts of her own, and that of others who are connected one way or another either to Craske or to Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske, and sometimes unexpectedly to the two in an illustration of the "degrees of separation" premise.

One of the epigraphs of the book is a very suitable and very lovely quote from Albert Einstein: "The individual is only an insignificant thread in an immense and miraculous pattern. This proves to be a wonderful device. It turns the text into a narrated bibliography of sorts, gently directing the reader's attention toward the process of writing and researching, of thinking and connecting the dots, and away from the product. One of the most useful things a recent dance teacher of mine used to reiterate was the importance of being present for the process of the movement rather than looking ahead to the product of its execution.

This book honours the same principle, which is ultimately where its brilliance lies. May 15, enricocioni rated it it was amazing. Shelves: biography/death/non-fiction. Profoundly moving. And wonderfully, unconventionally structured: instead of having a straightforward start-to-finish account of Craske's life, Blackburn weaves together seemingly disparate but related threads into a rich and satisfying tapestry partly, perhaps, because not much is actually known about him, but it does also fit with the theme—Craske produced many embroideries as well as paintings.

There's the thread of John Craske's short and relatively uneventful life; the thread of Blackburn Profoundly moving. Loved it, made me want to see the Glandford Shell Museum, and the Craske exhibition that happens to have opened just the other day in Norwich, and made me want to write, and read more of Blackburn's books.

John Craske Al van gehoord? Een onbekende in de kunstwereld, zo lijkt het wel. Hij was eenvoudige visser die bij Norwich woonde. Op jonge leeftijd kijkt hij een mysterieuse ziekte die niemand toen kon noemen: was het diabetes? Of was het een depressie? In elk geval kan hij niet meer de zee op en moet hij lange tijd in bed blijven. Zijn redding wordt het schilderen en borduren. Vanuit zijn bed. Zijn vrouw, Laura, staat aan zijn kant en helpt hem, redt hem. Zo eenvoudig is het verhaal. Julia B John Craske Julia Blackburn zoekt naar wie die John Craske toch was?

Je komt over Craske eigenlijk relatief weinig te weten in dit boek. Maar je leert hoe vissers leefden, hoe die Engelse kust is, over Einstein aan de kust, Mooi is ook hoe parallel het leven van de auteur loopt met dat van de Craske's.

Dec 01, Anneliese Tirry rated it really Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske it. Opgehangen Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske het willen ontrafelen van het Threads: The Delicate Life of John Craske leven van de vergeten kunstenaar John Craske krijgen we eigenlijk vele verhalen, vele korte schetsen over de vele gewone levens van vele gewone mensen, allen met hun eigen besognes.