THE CRAFT MAGAZINE WITH A DIFFERENCE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1995

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TRAPUNTO QUILTING

PERUVIAN KNITTING

SPANISH STITCH EMBROIDERY

JAPANESE SILK BRAIDS

HAIDA BUTTON BLANKETS

Knitting in Peru

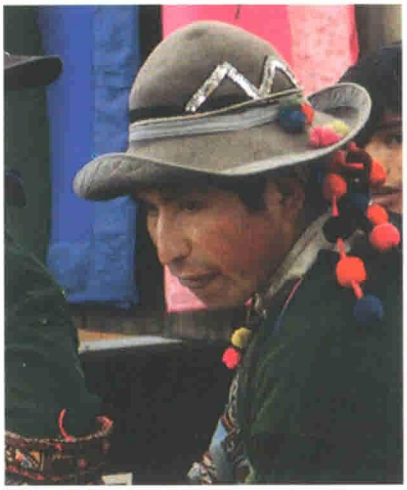




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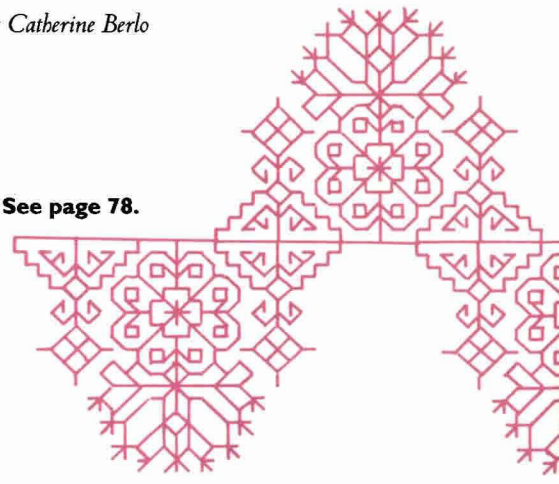


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See page 60.

Perfectly curious; every work
In which a *cunning skill* did lurk,
She had it at her *fingers* end,
And lov'd therein *fit* time to spend.
In *black-works, white works, colours* all,
That can be found on earths round ball.
John Batchiler, "The Virgin Pattern,"
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NOTIONS

From the editor

Clothed in Possibility

My new calico, that second year on the homestead, was a lovely piece, black, sprigged all over with tiny green leaves and red dots, and I liked it better than any dress I ever had.

Grace Snyder, *No Time on My Hands,* 1963

I AM IN A SUNNY GARDEN in Rochester, New York. It is just after lunch and I am tossing the crusts of my sandwiches between the rows of strawberry plants to feed the birds. I am four years old and wearing a pink seersucker sunsuit. I love this sunsuit. I remember the material when my mother had it by her sewing machine. My older sister's is the same pattern but blue. I touch the large, slightly pink pearly button where one shoulder strap meets the yoke. I am hot in the garden and a little dizzy, but not just from the sun. In fact, my mother has asked me if I feel all right, and I have lied. My throat hurts too much to swallow, but I am not telling her until I have to.

My mother, my sister, and I are shopping for school. I am to be in the first grade, I think, and am choosing a dress to start the school year. My sister and I are in different areas of the store, at least out of sight of each other. When we rejoin my mother, who waits mid-store, we have chosen the same blue-and-green-plaid dress in different sizes. We look at each other, not sure whether to be pleased or annoyed. There is something a little reassuring about it. We get the dresses.

We live in a small house across the street from a farm in the country and take a bus to a central school. We spend much of our time in the fields and woods. There is a skirt I have waited to inherit from my sister; it is still a bit too long. White, printed with strawberries and leaves, it is a perfect circle. The trick is to whirl fast enough so that it stands out like a plate, then drop so smoothly that it ends up spread in a circle on the ground. I practice for hours. It seems important to do this right.

From teaching creative writing, I learned that almost everyone remembers clothing from her or his childhood. It may be a cowgirl outfit with six-shooters, or something less dramatic—a long Christmas nightgown or a flannel shirt, but usually there's a bit of dream or emotion attached to it, often created by who gave it to us or where we wore it. It may be an outfit that we love from the beginning, for its pattern or texture, or some primal affinity that can't be unravelled. Or one in which we sense a possible self that others don't see. Sometimes clothing is made indelible by pain. In the college writing classes I taught, I found that students often recalled sharply the day their parents said they were getting divorced. They not only remembered the weather and what they had been doing before they were told, but also what they were wearing.

I am shopping with my mother for a dress for a high school dance. I fall in love with a long white dress with a red satin rose at the waist. We can't afford it. She buys it for me anyway. Although I don't have a wonderful time at the dance, the dress is important.

Do I remember clothes because of illness, my bond with my sister (living 500 miles apart, we're still likely to send our father the same birthday card), some longing to pirouette perfectly and see its results, my mother's unexpected understanding? If I were to make a quilt of the clothing I remember, as the oldest living confederate widow (see "Wordspinning," page 90) imagines a quilt of the fabrics of her life, are these the clothes I would include? Would I begin with a piece of pink sunlit seersucker? What would make up your quilt?

Veronica

Veronica Patterson
Editor

Life is an affair of putting on clothing.

Richard Wentz, "Clothed in the Beauty of Possibility," Parabola: The Magazine of Myth and Tradition, *Clothing, August 1994*



Bluing Balls

After reading "Washday Blues" ("A Stitch," September/October 1994), I thought readers might be interested in "Russ Ultramarine Blue Wash Blue In Balls—High Quality" from days gone by. These bright little bluing balls came in a quarter-pound box and cost ten cents. The directions for use were: "Make a flannel bag four inches square with only sufficient opening to admit four balls. Put four balls in bag, tie shut. Strain by hand in cold water until blue enough *then remove.* Immediately blue the clothes, each article separately, stir water occasionally."

Kay Reiber
Twisp, Washington

School Memories

Linda Ligon's remembrance-of-things-past articles such as "Washday Blues" ("A Stitch" September/October 1994) are always a delight.

Mrs. Stewart's stern visage surveyed our back porch from the shelf above the big copper washing machine (it even had gear shifts like a Model A Ford), the wringer, and the deep enamel wash basin. I never could quite understand how bluing got things whiter.

Next to Mrs. Stewart on the shelf were bars of Fels-Naphtha, redolent of gasoline, the ultimate grease spot fighter—and craft material. One of our fourth grade projects was to carve from a bar of soap a small replica of one of Father Serra's California missions. I chose the elegant Santa Ynez mission, with its long arched arcade, and a bar of Fels-Naphtha. On class presentation day, I was abashed to discover all my classmates had made their missions out of snowy-white Ivory, and there I stood with this dull ocher thing. That provoked several smirks from my classmates. However, the teacher singled me out for special praise in having chosen Fels-Naphtha, whose color so closely resembled the adobe bricks used in mission construction. That provoked even more smirks.

As the song says, "Thanks for the memories."
Patti Laursen
Los Angeles, California

Caution: Theories Should Remain Theories

I read the interesting article "To Tell a Story," by Trish Faubion, in the May/June issue. Two recently published books on Harriet Powers would enhance the Further Reading list: *Stitching Stars: The Story Quilts of Harriet Powers,* by Mary E. Lyons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons Books for Young Readers, 1993) and *Harriet Powers's Bible Quilts,* by Regenia A. Perry (New York: Rizzoli International, 1994). Another slightly older book should be cited as well: *Stitching Memories: African-American Story Quilts,* by Eva Ungar Grudin (Williamstown, Massachusetts: Williams College Museum of Art, 1990).

While John Michael Vlach, Gladys-Marie Fry, and Maude Wahlman's contributions to obtaining an acknowledgment of African-American quilts as important American folk art objects cannot be disputed, I do, at times, question the emphasis and focus of some of their studies. (I do have, however, a strong belief in the veracity of Gladys-Marie Fry's original study of Harriet Powers's Bible quilts). Very often, the scholars' interpretations of African-American quilts reveal more about the interpreters' pet theories than about the objects (the quilts) under scrutiny. A problem can occur when the theories offered by certain investigators are generally accepted as facts. Theories about the history of African-American quilts not supported by documentation should remain theories. They should be the *beginnings,* the stimuli for further study and factual research.

As to the symbolism some persons "read into" African-American religious-themed quilts and form generalizations about Black-made quilts, the wisest course is to tread lightly. Why not listen to and *believe* what African-American quilters themselves say about their own works? The attitude that black quilters are too uneducated,



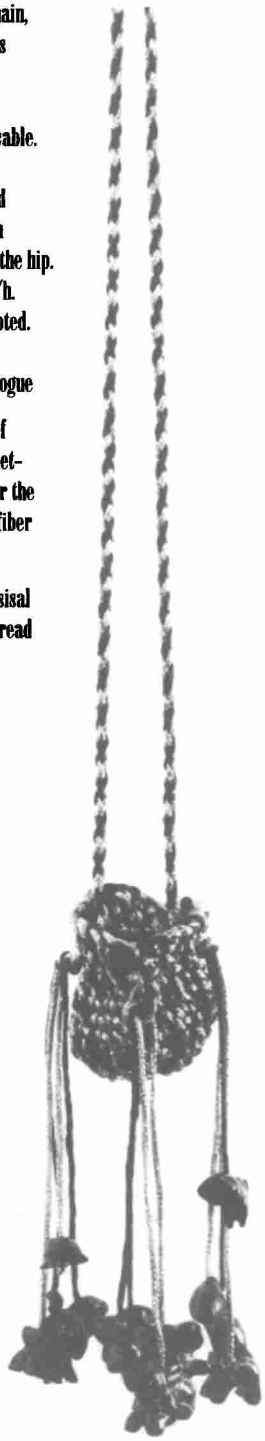
Bluing balls.
Courtesy of Kay Reiber. Photograph by Joe Coca.

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too ignorant to express themselves or to articulate their ideas for creating their quilts is the height of arrogance. Interpretations based on the black quilters' words can be done. When Gladys-Marie Fry, in 1976, wrote the seminal study on Harriet Powers in *Missing Pieces: Georgia Folk Art, 1770–1976,* she took Harriet Powers's recorded words as the basis of her research. . . . Some subsequent investigations of Harriet Powers's quilts by others have contained imaginative theories, unsupported by historical fact or a proven direct link with Harriet Powers. Studies that are sprinkled with "could be," "probably is," or "most likely is," unsupported by historical documentation, do not meet the criteria for verifiable research. Only recently have African-American quilts been acknowledged as a viable part of American folk art/craft history. It seems I may be standing alone, like St. John in the wilderness, exhorting the cause of the individual African-American quilter's creativity, a recognition of the diversity of African-American quilting, and most of all, an abandonment of the en-masse "cookie cutter approach" to the investigations and research of African-American quilt history.

Cuesta Benberry
St. Louis, Missouri

Setting the Record Straight

The Hawaiian Quilt Research Project was pleased to see the Hawaiian Quilt article written by Debra L. Ballard (July/August 1994). As the Project is in the process of registering and documenting Hawaiian quilts and quilt patterns throughout the state, it is gratifying to see this special folk art getting national exposure. However, we are concerned about a few historical inaccuracies contained in the article and some misrepresentations of facts concerning the history of Hawaiian quilts.

Captain James Cook was killed at Kealakekua Bay on the island of Hawaii.

The brig *Thaddeus,* carrying the first American missionaries, anchored off Kawaihae at the island of Hawaii, and it was on the trip from Kawaihae to Kona, Hawaii, that Mrs. Thurston wrote of the first sewing circle.

The *Kahili* as depicted in the quilt on page 33 is a feather standard that is a symbol of royalty.

The *kukui* is a large tree whose fruit consists of a nut. The elements of a kukui design usually depict the leaf, flowers, and nut of the tree.

No historical documentation has been found to substantiate historians' speculation that the earliest known royal flag quilts were made in 1843. This is a possibility, but it is not a certainty. The author is quoting Rodney Kiracofe in *The American Quilt,* who in turn misinterprets a statement by Elizabeth Akana. Akana states "A likely date for the appearance of the Royal Hawaiian Flag quilt is 1843 when the Hawaiian Kingdom was briefly under British sovereignty" (personal interview July 27, 1994). It was during this time that there was a prohibition against flying the Hawaiian flag.

The translation of *Ku'u Hae Aloha* is accepted as "My Beloved Flag." To translate it as "lost" in this instance is grammatically incorrect.

Further Reading entry "Schlick, Robert J." should read "Schleck."

We shall continue to enjoy the publication and the efforts to educate readers about the world of textiles.

Lee S. Wild, Vice President
Hawaiian Quilt Research Project
Kailua, Hawaii

The preceding comments have been excerpted from a letter received from Lee S. Wild of the Hawaiian



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Quilt Research Project. Debra Ballard responds that although her resources were usually quoted correctly, some of them have been superseded by newer publications. She relied heavily on Kaniu Ryan for translation and interpretation. We are pleased to know of recent findings by the Hawaiian Quilt Research Project and look forward to its subsequent publications.

Hawaiian Native

We thank Annette Mahon for many of the same comments that are in the above letter plus the following:

There is a quilt by an unknown maker like the unnamed blue-and-white top on page 34 shown in *Hawaiian Quilts,* from the Honolulu Academy of arts (1989). The only difference lies in five-pointed stars scattered over the surface of the top. The name of this quilt, which is red and white, is *Ke Kahi o Ka'iulani* or "the Comb of Ka'iulani."

I would like to say that I found Ms. Ballard's photographs of the quilts very nice. I am especially fond of the Lily Kapa—a particularly beautiful lacy design—and the unusual Maile Lei.

I am always happy to see photos and articles about Hawaiian quilts.

Annette Mahon
Paradise Valley, Arizona

Hydrofluoric Acid Danger

In Mary Jo Meade's article on the restoration of a beaded Yoruba headdress (January/February 1994), she describes the use of hydrofluoric acid to alter the color and reduce the size of modern glass embroidery beads so that they would resemble the nineteenth-century beads that originally composed the headdress. While the process she describes is most interest-

ing, it must be stressed that the use of hydrofluoric acid for such purposes may be hazardous to both the user and the object being restored.

Karlis Karklins
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

We appreciate Karlis Karklins' expressed concerns but must point out that the article made it very clear that the hydrofluoric acid was used in a laboratory by a chemist. We feel the author gave ample warning about substances and procedures. There is probably no such thing, however, as too much caution when such chemicals are involved, so we include Mr. Karklins' reiteration of the hazards.

Symbolism Not Necessarily There

It is important to document the history of various kinds of needlework. However, I think one aspect of this history is being overemphasized: the meaning or symbolism of designs and colors. Certainly some designs and colors have symbolic content, but anthropologists and historians have gone overboard trying to read meaning into everything. They even admit that it's hard to learn the meaning from the needleworkers, and that sometimes needleworkers tell anthropologists what they think the anthropologists want to hear.

As someone experienced in various kinds of handwork, I know that many factors influence my final product: 1) My mood at the time I'm working, and the environment I'm working in. I may feel like doing something intricate or something bold, in a bright color or a somber color. I might say to myself, "I'm getting tired of doing all these green zigzags; I'll switch to red for awhile." 2) My intuitive feelings about the piece. I may be dissatisfied with my project and look for a different arrangement that feels right. I may chance upon a new combination that looks nice. 3) The materials I have on hand. I may sew something with a contrasting color thread because I don't have a matching color. I may need to piece out a pattern with scraps. I may decide to use up leftovers.

These factors are difficult if not impossible to document, but to anyone who has done handwork, it's not hard to recognize these influences in the work of others.

Jill Knuth
Stanford, California

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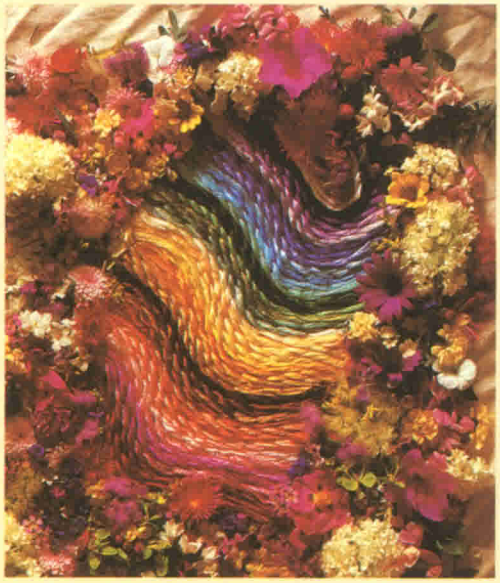
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Twined Rug Passion

Bobbie Irwin has one more convert to the passion of rug twining. After seeing her article and the photos in the September/October 1993 issue, I rooted out what rags I could and started my own rug. I was not satisfied to try the small size she proposed and not able to justify using new fabric.

I used Lillie Sherwood's loom construction, which is wonderfully simple. The surprising thing was the strength required to tug the twined strips tight, and the mess it made with frayed fabrics. Now finished, it resides in our entrance hall, greeting visitors with its mixed-up colors and lovely soft thickness.

This was the project that reached out to me. I am sure other readers are equally energized by the various arts described in each issue. I would be interested in seeing and learning about others' experiences recreating the works presented in your magazine. How about an article sharing the project handiwork of your readers?

Jean Reed
Narita-shi, Chiba-ken, Japan

Let us know if you would be interested in sharing your own and hearing about other readers' project experiences. We couldn't print every story, but we could share some of them.

Kalagas

In response to the letter from Carol Bishop (July/August 1994): Burmese kalagas are lavishly embellished, embroidered banners that depict scenes from the life of Buddha. Each kalaga I've seen contains sequins sewn onto a black background. The rich embroidery is executed in silk or cotton. They are extravagant in their appearance, making an instant impact on their viewers. Their function in Burmese religious life is analogous to paintings that portray the works of Christ in Western art.

I suggest the following books for further study of kalagas: *Burmese Art,* by John Lowry, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1974; and *Burma: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography,* edited by Frank M. Trager, Human Relations Area Files, New Haven, Connecticut, 1973.

To see kalagas firsthand for study, two midwestern universities have Burmese art collections that may be available to researchers: The Center for Burma Studies, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois; and the Burma Collection, Department of Visual Arts, Denison University, Granville, Ohio. Founders Library at Northern Illinois University also houses a

Southeast Asia collection of monographic and periodic literature.

Miranda Howard Haddock
Oak Park, Illinois

We thank the many readers who responded with resources on kalagas: Kalagas: The Wall Hangings of Southeast Asia, *by Mary Anne Stanislaw (Ainslie's, PO Box 7656, Menlo Park, CA 94026-7656, 1987); "Golden Tapestries from Burma," by Sara Drower,* Threads *(June/July 1988); an article by Sylvia Frazer-Lu in* Arts of Asia, *August 1992; an article by Kathleen Bradbury in* Sawaddi, *March/April 1979; and "Burmese Appliqué Hangings" and "Designs from Burmese Kalagas," by Mary Krishna, which we have been unable to locate.*

Notes

An incorrect quilt photograph appeared on page 22 in "Crazy Quilt" (November/December 1994). This dynamic Appalachian quilt is part of Maury Bynum's show, "Textiles in Motion," at the Textile Conservators' Gallery, 311 North Desplaines St., Suite 601, Chicago, IL 60611.



Courtesy of Maury Bynum, Textile Conservators' Gallery. Photograph by Joe Coca.

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A PLACE TO COME TO

Sue Lenthe

Portsmouth D-Day Museum: the Overlord Embroidery

THERE WAS A TIME when history was recorded in story and song, with paint, or with needle and thread. More recently, the lens of a camera has been used to memorize and memorialize. In this world of accelerating technology, the idea of recording history through needlework seems almost quaint, but in the late 1960s, an English lord, an artist, and twenty-five needleworkers eschewed technology in favor of needle and thread to commemorate the World War II D-Day invasion of France with a massive embroidery.



D-Day Museum, Portsmouth, England.

Why a fabric memorial? The answer lies across the English Channel in a museum in Bayeux, France. The 224-foot-long Bayeux Tapestry displayed there served as Lord Dulverton's inspiration. The crewel embroidery wrought of colored woolen thread on linen cloth records the invasion and conquest of England by William the Conqueror in 1066. The 224-foot-long Bayeux Tapestry, with 1,512 figures recorded in seventy-two scenes, still speaks eloquently of life, death, and doing battle in the eleventh century some 900 years later.

THE CHANNEL CONNECTION

Dulverton sought "a Bayeux tapestry in reverse" when he commissioned his Overlord Embroidery, named for D Day's Operation Overlord, according to "D-Day and the Battle of Hastings—A Common Thread," (*Smithsonian*, May 1994). In a sense, D Day represents the Norman invasion "in reverse." Whereas William the Conqueror with his wooden ships, horses, and soldiers sailed north across the channel from the windswept beaches of Normandy to the shores of Britain, D-Day commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower crossed south over the same windroiled waters.

The D-Day invasion, launched June 6, 1944, was the beginning of the end of Adolf Hitler's hold over western Europe. The invasion represented a military alliance of significance between Britain and the United States. With 176,000 troops, thousands of warplanes, ships, and transport vehicles, the Allies crossed the English Channel to invade the beaches of Normandy. During the invasion, thousands of soldiers lost their lives. Dulverton, who died in 1992, was modest about his own involvement in D Day. He did not participate in the invasion, but in assessing the sniping skills of troops involved in the campaigns that followed.



Lord Dulverton.
Courtesy of the Dulverton Trust.





The 224-foot-long Bayeux Tapestry still speaks eloquently of life, death, and doing battle in the eleventh century some 900 years later.

Top photo: Soldiers on horseback fighting. Bayeux Tapestry.

Bottom photo: Soldiers crossing the English Channel. Bayeux Tapestry.

Courtesy Musée de la Tapisserie, Centre Guillaume le Conquérant, Bayeux, France.

As the world marked the fiftieth anniversary of the D-Day invasion last year, the 272-foot-long chronicle of the event in needlework drew record numbers to its home in the Portsmouth D-Day Museum in Portsmouth, England. In 1993, year, according to Stephen Brooks, museum curator, 90,000 people visited the museum, which is funded by the Portsmouth City Council, government grants, and admission charges. He expected that number to have doubled by the end of 1994. A seven-day free-admission period in June alone drew 33,000 people.

Visiting the Overlord Embroidery is a moving and sometimes emotional experience, Brooks said. People often come skeptical but leave impressed. "What people think they're coming to see is one big wall hanging, a tapestry," but they find an embroidery and a story that "goes on and on." The embroidery is displayed in thirty-four 8-by-3-foot panels in a series of glass-covered bays. A darkened gallery and lighting designed to minimize reflection give the impression that the embroidery is hanging in space. The effect is dramatic.

The Making of the Overlord Tapestry

The British artist Sandra Lawrence designed the watercolor images from which the Overlord



The battle on land.
Courtesy of the Portsmouth D-Day Museum.

Embroidery was stitched using appliqué and embroidery techniques. Lawrence worked from written and photographic records of the D-Day invasion, her initial designs in pencil. After approval by Lord Dulverton and a group of advisers, she then made full-sized watercolor cartoons which then went to the Royal School of Needlework in London.

Founded in 1872, the Royal School of Needlework continues its original charge, preserving needlework skills by providing training and apprenticeships in the ancient craft. In addition to teaching, the school accepts commissions, such as the Overlord Embroidery, does conservation and renovation work, and produces hand-painted needlework kits. Lord Dulverton paid the School £1,000 per panel for the first eight panels completed and £1,100 for the remaining twenty-six.

Elizabeth Elvin, principal for the Royal School of Needlework, was among the twenty-five seamstresses—or rather twenty seamstresses and five apprentices—who worked on the Overlord Embroidery. Three of the twenty-five, Margaret Bartlett, Wendy Hogg, and Elizabeth oversaw the project. Fabrics were suggested with the approved design; the three selected stitches and threads. Only Margaret, who has since died, was old enough to have experienced the war.

As with any large project, Elizabeth Elvin said, there was a sense of teamwork, and everyone was totally involved. Usually three different panels were worked at a time, with three to six seamstresses working at each frame. Others were preparing drawings and assembling the necessary fabrics and threads. The seamstresses worked on the project five days a week for seven-and-a-half hours a day.

The needleworkers employed a variety of stitching techniques, including appliqué, outlining with cords or threads (sometimes couched, sometimes attached with a stitch angled into the twist of the cord so that it disappears), satin stitch, long-and-short stitch, running stitch, and stem



stitch. These were applied to the cloth as follows. First, strong cotton fabric was stretched on wooden embroidery frames. Purple linen was then sewn on top of the cotton. The double layers provided a stable base for the embroidery and appliqué. Some of the linen fabric shows where it was not covered by other fabrics.

Tracings made from the watercolor cartoons were pricked with a needle along the lines of the design. When the punctured tracing was pinned to the linen, sprinkled with a dark powder called pounce, and rubbed lightly, dots of pounce marked the fabric below. Removing the tracing paper revealed a map of every shape composing Lawrence's design. Dots were connected with a fine brush and oil-based paints similar to the fabric colors.

The needleworkers then used the full-color cartoon as a guide for selecting fabrics to be appliquéd over the map of dotted lines provided by the ancient pricking and pouncing technique. Fifty different fabrics were appliquéd. Fine netting was stitched over certain areas to suggest a hazy smoke in one of the battle scenes. Corduroy formed a little boy's trousers; lace composed a French woman's pajama collar. Other fabrics include original khaki uniform cloth, and a piece of a paratrooper's beret, as well as silk, velvet, and burlap.

In some cases, embroidery stitches were used rather than appliqué. The faces of some of the VIPs were worked separately in long-and-short stitches. The faces were embroidered separately and then appliquéd to the larger piece. Embroidery stitches also provided texture; French knots, for example, represent pebbles on the beach.

Work began on the piece in 1968, and the final stitches were taken in January 1974. The Overlord Embroidery was made entirely by hand.

Aside from keeping the embroidery at constant temperature and humidity and in dim light, no extraordinary measures have been taken to preserve it, Brooks said. Just how long the piece might last is unclear. If the life span of the Bayeux





D-Day landing on the beaches of France.
Courtesy of the Portsmouth D-Day Museum.

Crossing the English Channel on D Day.
Courtesy of the Portsmouth D-Day Museum.

Perhaps it's the very temerity of choosing this seemingly anachronistic technique to record a recent event that is part of the Overlord Embroidery's appeal.

Tapestry is any indication, the Overlord Embroidery ought to be around at least another 900 years. "Over the very long term, we don't know how the fabrics are going to behave," Brooks said. Large sections of the Bayeux Tapestry have been restitched; the same might someday be true of the Overlord Embroidery, he said.

The embroidery may be seen seven days a week at the Portsmouth D-Day Museum, built to display it. The museum, located on Clarence Esplanade in Portsmouth, Hampshire, England, was enlarged in recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the invasion. In addition to displaying the embroidery itself and a panel that shows how it was created, the museum offers interpretive exhibits of artifacts, photographs, and documents that tell the story of the events leading up to D Day and the invasion itself. Perhaps it's the very temerity of choosing this seemingly anachronistic technique to record a recent event that is part of the Overlord Embroidery's appeal.

Museum hours April through September are 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Hours October through March are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is £3.50 and £2 for senior citizens and children.

Residents of the United States may soon be able to view Sandra Lawrence's watercolor cartoons for the Overlord Embroidery without traveling to England. Negotiations are under way to display the cartoons at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

About the Author. *Sue Lenthe is a freelance author who lives in Berthoud, Colorado.*

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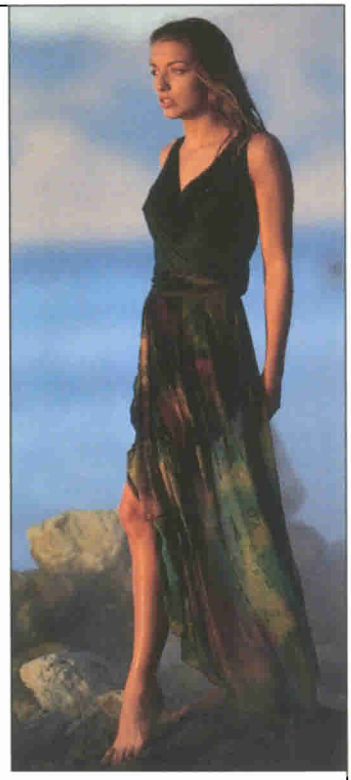
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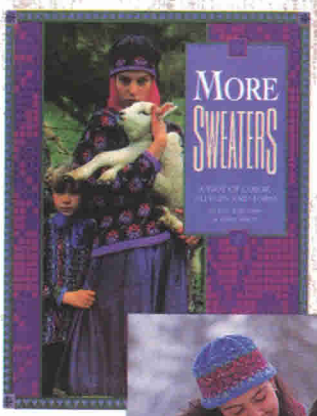


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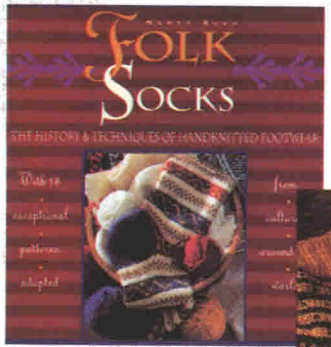
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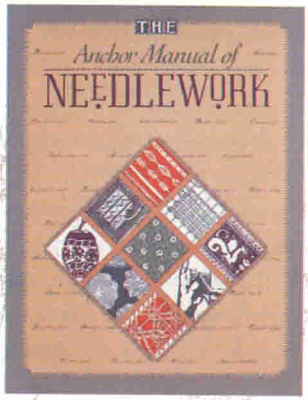
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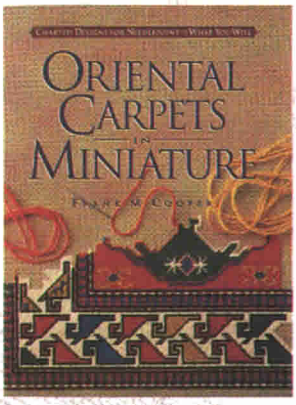
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Crazy Quilt

Events, news, and things

Burmese Crafts Lecture at the Asian Institute

One could describe the crafts of Myanmar (formerly Burma) in a single word: detail. Many intricate patterns are used in all Burmese handiwork, which is steeped in legend and folklore. Complex representational and abstract designs are presented alone or intermingled. These designs, which include gyrating animals, marauding men, and abstract shapes both floral and flowing, are entrancing: a feast for the eyes. That is what I experienced at a lecture given by Sylvia Fraser-lu this fall at the Institute for Asian Studies in New York City. Fraser-lu, author of numerous books, most recently *Burmese Crafts Past and Present* (Oxford University Press, 1994), is an authority on the crafts of Southeast Asia. The Burmese focus on detail is clear in all their media, including wood carving, pottery, textiles, lacquerware, silver, iron, and bronze work. Great attention is paid even to the decoration of the most commonplace objects, such as the large clay water jars that stand outside each villager's home. The lecture was exciting and so packed with information as to be almost overwhelming; I and others were intensely absorbed into Burmese culture for the evening. I left full of images and encouraged to continue study of this complex culture and its finely designed and executed crafts.

—Mary Jo Meade

Travelers: The New World Tapestry (see "Crazy Quilt," September/October 1994, page 7) now has a permanent display of nine panels at Coldharbour Mill, Uffculme, Cullompton Devon EX15 3EE, England.

Mexican Jenny's Quilt

Among the quilts on display January 3 through February 26 at the Rocky Mountain Quilt Museum in Golden, Colorado, is a crazy quilt made in the 1920s by Jenny Wenner, also known as Mexican Jenny. Legend says that she worked as a "lady of the evening" in Cripple Creek. After being beaten by her husband for not bringing home enough money, she killed him with his own gun. She was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment at the Territorial Penitentiary in Canon City.

Using fabrics from the fancy dresses that she brought with her, Mexican Jenny spent her prison time piecing and embroidering an elaborate quilt, which includes an image of her dead husband. When she contracted tuberculosis, the quilt and her other belongings were sold and the proceeds used to send her to Mexico, where she spent her last days. Eugenia Mitchell, a major benefactor of the museum, acquired the Mexican Jenny quilt from an antique dealer.



Detail of the Mexican Jenny quilt made by Jenny Wenner, circa 1920, while serving a prison sentence for killing her husband.

The museum's current exhibit features quilts made and collected by Eugenia Mitchell, whose generous donation of 100 quilts forms the basis of the museum's permanent collection. Quilts from the permanent collection are included annually in each of six exhibitions at the quilt museum, located at 1111 Washington Avenue.

American Quilt Study Group: In the Company of Quilt Historians

Between October 21 and 23, 1994, in downtown Birmingham, Alabama, the American Quilt Study Group (A.Q.S.G.) held its fifteenth annual quilt seminar. Frequent rain didn't dampen the passion of this eclectic group of quilt enthusiasts and historians. The keynote address, "What's Happening in Quiltmaking Today?" by the quilt artist Nancy Crow, made it clear that this organization sees today's work as tomorrow's history. Crow's talk introduced selected American quilt artists through slides of their work and their studios, and statements about their developing art and its context: their lives. Among papers presented in the auditorium of the Birmingham Art Museum were "Mildred Dickerson: A Quilt Pattern Collector of the 1960s and 1970s," by the quilt historian Merikay Waldvogel; "An Album of Baltimore Album Quilt Studies," by Jennifer F. Goldsborough, Chief Curator, Maryland Historical Society; and "Aesthetics and Ethnicity: Scotch-Irish Quilts in West Virginia," by Fawn Valentine, director of the West Virginia Heritage Quilt Search. If days were packed with sessions (even dinner tables were organized by discussion topics), evenings were alive with "Show and Tell," a lively time of fund raising via auctioning of donated quilts and quilt-related items, old and new, interspersed with reports on interesting quilt finds and brief descriptions of research in progress. The conference and the organization behind it, whose goal is "to develop a responsible and accurate body of information about quilts and their makers" fit well the definition of a university: "the pursuit of excellence in the company of friends."

For more information, write to the American Quilt Study Group, 660 Mission St., Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94105-4007. (415) 495-0163. Members receive the quarterly newsletter *Blanket Statements.* A.Q.S.G. publishes its yearly seminar proceedings in *Uncoverings: Research Papers of the American Quilt Study Group,* available from A.Q.S.G.



Photograph courtesy of Maury Bynum.

Antick Virgins and Stale Maids

A woman who does not know how to sew
is as deficient in her education
as a man who cannot write.
Let her condition in life be what it may,
she cannot be ignorant of the use of her needle.
Eliza Ware Rotch Farrar,
The Young Lady's Friend, By a Lady, 1837

In early America, plain sewing was so basic to any girl's training that a girl who couldn't sew was considered odd, certainly not ready for marriage. And marriage was not merely a goal in life for a girl; it was her mission. She heard enough derogatory remarks about spinsters (also known as "thornbacks," "stale virgins," "antick virgins," "stale maids," and "old maids") and witnessed enough contemptuous treatment of them to understand very early that if she were to fail to marry, she would bring not only unhappiness but a measure of social disgrace on herself and her family. To win a husband and to serve him well, she had to know how to sew.

Susan Burrows Swan, *Plain and Fancy: American Women and Their Needlework, 1700–1850,* 1977

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ONE EARTH, ONE PEOPLE:
CULTURAL EXCHANGE JOINS AMERICAN AND JAPANESE QUILTERS

The American quilt artist Risë Nagin will travel to Japan in May to lecture in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Nara as part of a new cultural exchange inaugurated by Nihon Vogue Co., Ltd., publisher of *Quilts Japan*. One of thirty-eight artists exhibiting at the 1994 "Visions" show in San Diego, Nagin was selected as the first Quilts Japan winner. Her prizewinning entry, *Target: On the Beach*, will travel with her to Japan.

Nihon Vogue, a major Japanese craft magazine and book publisher, also sponsors one of the largest Japanese teacher training programs in needlework. According to company president Tadanobu Seto, the exchange project was conceived to "express our gratefulness of the continuing growth of the Japanese quilt today, which is due greatly to American quilters, and to pay our respect to the predecessors of quilt making." He expressed his desire that the award, which will be conferred annually into the next century, will strengthen bonds between quilters in the two countries and create new ties.

Susan Knobloch, Executive Director of Quilt San Diego, sponsor of the "Visions" exhibit, noted, "The Quilts Japan Prize provides a valuable step in the recognition that we are one earth, one people." Familiar with *Quilts Japan* magazine, she commented that Japanese quilters have been strongly influenced by American-style patchwork



The Quilts Japan prizewinning *Target: On the Beach*, by American quilt artist Risë Nagin.

Courtesy of Quilt San Diego. Photograph by Carina Woolrich, San Diego.

and quilting while adding their own artistic style elements.

Risë Nagin's art quilts have been exhibited extensively in the United States and Europe, and her work is included in several museum collections. "Over the past twenty years," Nagin comments, "the studio art quilt movement has become international in scope." She sees the Quilts Japan award as "an important opportunity for international exchange of ideas and as a major contribution to the continued artistic development of quilts throughout the world."

The Quilts Japan award for 1995 will be presented to a Quilt National exhibitor.

French Patchwork Reference Delights Quilt Researcher

> In the year 1507, I, Phillipe, made a piece of needlework the like of which had never been seen: it was a piece of cloth cut and sewn together, in which there were more than eight thousand pieces put and joined together, all on the bias and in wool, and it looked like a painting, it was so well done . . . I . . . offered to give ten gold coins to anyone who dared undertake such a piece or even half of it . . . [T]his piece [was] hung all day long on St. Marc's day of that year, in the Cathedral square, in the view of everyone and no one dared remove [it] or deposit a coin to take up the challenge.

So wrote master needleworker Phillipe de Vigneulles in one of the few early references to quilting, recently discovered by the French scholar Janine Jannière and described in *The Quilt Journal* (vol. 3, no. 1, 1994). According to Jannière, de Vigneulles was born in 1471 into a peasant family, worked as a draper and hosier, and before his death in 1528, had become a wealthy merchant in Metz, France. A skilled stitcher, he was also renowned as a writer and historian.

De Vigneulles's fabric was a banner depicting the Virgin Mary and two saints, decorated with coats of arms of religious and political figures of the time, all elaborately embroidered. Neither the masterpiece nor any pictures of it have survived, but de Vigneulles's statement and an accompanying poem and letter that were posted next to the banner give clues to its probable construction. Jannière believes it was a combination of piecework, appliqué, and embroidery, probably in a variety of colors, so-called mosaic fabric.

According to Jannière, examples and written accounts of European patchwork before the eighteenth century are very rare. The text by Phillipe de Vigneulles helps fill in a 500-year gap in European quilting history.

The *Quilt Journal* is a publication of The Quilt Project/The Kentucky Quilt Project, Inc., PO Box 6251, Louisville, KY 40206.

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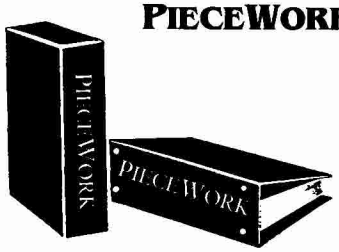
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CRAZY QUILT

PRISON ESCAPEE PLIES HIS CRAFT

Robert Shepard may be better remembered for how he got out of jail than for why he was imprisoned in the first place. The West Virginia inmate escaped June 29, 1994, from the South Central Regional jail in Wood County by using a hand-braided rope of dental floss to climb a cinder-block wall and suspend himself while cutting through a fence. Shepard apparently obtained the floss through proper channels at the prison commissary. Embarrassed jail officials didn't describe the braiding process in detail but said that the rope was as thick as a telephone cord.

Shepard was recaptured about five weeks later. It's reported that other prisons have limited the availability of similar dental hygiene materials.

MEMORIES

I can remember even back before I was old enough to quilt, my mother and older sisters would be quiltin' and us little ones had to keep their needles threaded. We'd be out in the yard playin' and they'd holler they needed some needles. We had a whole bunch of needles that we'd run in and thread . . . then when they run out of needles threaded, here they'd holler again.

Unnamed quilter, quoted in Patricia Cooper and Norma Bradley Buferd, *The Quilters: Women and Domestic Art*, 1978

DATING WITH BURLAP

The background material [of a hooked rug] may afford some clues to a rug's age. The earliest rugs were made on a foundation of linen or hemp. However, once burlap was introduced, it almost entirely replaced linen or hemp. . . . The coarse fabric [available as feed sacks] allowed the fabric strips to be pulled through with a crochet or button hook. . . . Rugs hooked on burlap are generally presumed to date after 1850.

Leslie Linsley, *Hooked Rugs: An American Folk Art*, 1992

FAIRY QUILT

One of the oldest references to quilting in Europe is included in the "Lai de Désiré," a thirteenth-century French poem or fairy tale which takes place in Scotland. Its author is believed to have lived in England. The poem tells the story of a nobleman's son who falls in love with a fairy. Her bed is described as having an appliquéd cover.

Adapted from an article by Janine Jannière, *The Quilt Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1994

Books Noted

Fancy Feet: Traditional Knitting Patterns of Turkey, by Anna Zilboorg, presents an array of colorful photographs of and charts for traditional Turkish socks. Designs also have been adapted for sweaters for more experienced knitters. Lark Books, 50 College St., Asheville, NC 28801, 1994. Hardbound, 128 pages, $18.95. ISBN 0-937274-75-5.

Designing Ecclesiastical Stitched Textiles, by Beryl Dean, is an illustrated study of the elements of traditional and contemporary church embroidery and design. Photographs and drawings show the use of color, sign, and symbol in vestments and furnishings for general readers and ecclesiastical textile designers while text explains their history. Morehouse Publishing, 871 Ethan Allen Hwy., Suite 204, Ridgefield, CT 06877, 1993. Hardbound, 95 pages, $35. ISBN 0-85532-752-9.

Speaking with Beads: Zulu Arts from Southern Africa, by Jean Morris and Eleanor Preston-Whyte, shows how a craft of symbolic beadwork has retained much of its historical intricacy and vibrancy in current Zulu life while becoming fashionable worldwide. The well-researched text is accompanied by stunning photographs of native people and their beadwork. Thames and Hudson, 500 Fifth Ave. New York, NY 10110, 1994. Softbound, 96 pages, $19.95. ISBN 0-500-27757-5.

Beads of the World: A Collector's Guide with Price Reference, by Peter Francis, Jr., is an absorbing look at collectible beads from around the world. The author's extensive travel and research make this book a good reference for those interested in anthropology and archaeology. The price guide, reference section, and a list of bead organizations make it a valuable resource for collectors. Schiffer Publishing, 77 Lower Valley Rd., Atglen, PA 19310. Softbound, 142 pages, $19.95. ISBN 0-88740-559-2.

Fabric Postcards: Landmarks and Landscapes, Monuments and Meadows, by Judi Warren, presents a collection of fabric postcards side by side with the photo or paper postcard that inspired them. With tips from the author on construction and composition, quilters will find this an innovative way to create evocative images in fabric. American Quilter's Society, PO Box 3290, Paducah, KY 42002-3290. Softbound, 120 pages, $22.95. ISBN 0-89145-833-6.

New Dimensions in Tatting, by To De Haan-van Beek, introduces tatters to a new technique that creates three-dimensional designs. The book introduces basic shuttle and needle tatting for beginners and offers new approaches for the experienced tatter. LACIS, 3163 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94706, 1994. Softbound, 88 pages, $14. ISBN 0-916896-52-8.

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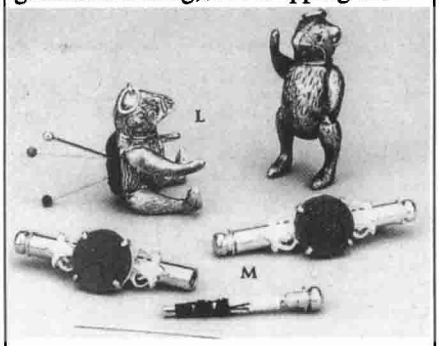
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CRAZY QUILT

THIMBLES

Thimbles made before the nineteenth century usually have a rounded top. They were made from a disk of metal which was hammered into shape in a thimble stamp, or they were cut out in two pieces and were vertically seamed and then seamed again around the top. Horn thimbles were certainly made in the colonies and probably ivory ones. Late in the eighteenth century pinchbeck (imitation gold named after the inventor) and brass thimbles would be made, and steel tops would be included on silver ones. The nineteenth century brought squared-off tops and some time in mid-century, size numbers.

Hope Hanley, *Needlepoint in America,* 1969

EARLY RUG KITS

Perhaps the first to package and market hooked rug patterns was Edward Sands Frost, a tin peddler from Maine whose wife was a rug maker. At her suggestion, Frost designed metal stencil patterns that he applied to burlap. He began taking them on his route in 1868, and within eight years had an inventory of 180 different rug designs. . . . [H]is simplified, [symmetrical] patterns made rug hooking accessible to an eager new audience.

Leslie Linsley, *Hooked Rugs: An American Folk Art,* 1992

CREELAGHS

One of the most unusual traditional baskets is the *creelagh,* designed for holding carded wool while spinning. Shaped like an American football with a square hole at the top, it comes from the Highlands and islands of Scotland.

Dorothy Wright, *The Complete Guide to Basket Weaving,* 1972

Calendar

✦ **MOBILE, ALABAMA.** March 4–5. Pride of Mobile Quilt Show, sponsored by the Azalea City Quilters Guild. Anne Godwin, 1520 Godwin Ln., Mobile, AL 36618. (205) 344-3237.

✦ **TUCSON, ARIZONA.** January 20–22. Tucson Quilter's Guild's 17th Annual Quilt Show at the Tucson Convention Center, 260 S. Church St., Tucson, AZ 85701. Meg Zechiel, (602) 744-0930.

✦ **LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA.** June 25–30. The Embroiderers' Guild of America presents the Pacific Southwestern Region Seminar '95, Threaded Treasures. Send a large SASE to Carol Underwood, 6616 Springpark #7, Los Angeles, CA 90056.

✦ **MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA.** April 28–30. Conference of the Northern California Handweavers (CNCH) '95: Our Ocean's Rim, Today, and Tomorrow, Monterey Conference Center. Registration information, PO Box 6995, San Jose, CA 95150-6995. (408) 293-6505.

✦ **OXNARD, CALIFORNIA.** March 18–19. Stitchers' Faire and Boutique, sponsored by the Channel Islands Chapter of the Embroiderers' Guild of America, PO Box 6813, Oxnard, CA 93031.

✦ **SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA.** February 11–12. A Forest of Fibers, presented by the Sacramento Weavers and Spinners Guild at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center. (916) 454-0765 or (916) 736-1221.

✦ **SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA.** March 31–April 1. Sixth Biennial Needle Art Show, sponsored by the Redwood Stitchers Chapter of the Embroiderers' Guild of America. Send a SASE to Rose Norris, 2044 Woodside Dr., Santa Rosa, CA 95404. (707) 544-8016.

✦ **HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT.** Through February 26. Cheney Textiles: A Century of Silk at the Wadsworth Atheneum, 600 Main St., Hartford, CT 06103.

✦ **ORLANDO, FLORIDA.** March 24–26. Florida Tropical Weavers Guild's Annual Conference. Babs Boudreau, 733 Laurel Ave., Venice, FL 34292. (813) 488-6217.

✦ **PENSACOLA, FLORIDA.** March 24–25. Pensacola Quilts! 6th Biennial Quilt Show and Sale, sponsored by the Pensacola Quilters' Guild. Angie Helman, 3965 Scenic Highway Cir., Pensacola, FL 32504. (904) 434-3872.

✦ **TAVARES, FLORIDA.** March 3–4. Lake County Quilters Guild's 13th Annual Quilt Show at the Lake County Agricultural Center. Kathryn Lowry, 3209 Rainbow Rd., Tavares, FL 32778.

✦ **ATLANTA, GEORGIA.** March 30–April 2. Fiber Forum 1995, hosted by the Peachtree Handspinners Guild. Workshops include knitting, tapestry crocheting, spinning, and weaving. Suzanne Deal-Fitzgerald, PO Box 80904, Conyers, GA 30208. (404) 786-0510.

✦ **ST. CHARLES, ILLINOIS.** March 22–26. The Knitting Guild of America's National Convention. Deadline for International Design Competition is February 9. Send a SASE to TKGA Design Competition, PO Box 1606, Knoxville, TN 37901.

✦ **SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS.** January 22–April 16. Patchwork Souvenirs of the 1933 Chicago World's Fair at the Illinois State Museum, Spring and Edwards Sts., Springfield, IL 62706.

✦ **FORT WAYNE, INDIANA.** March 25. A Gathering of Quilters V, sponsored by the Appleseed Quilters Guild, PO Box 25031, Fort Wayne, IN 46825.

✦ **LAMONI, IOWA.** March 17–18. Southern Iowa Quilt Show, Timeless Treasures, sponsored by Heartland Quilter's Guild at Graceland College Shaw Center. Send a SASE to Nadine Cracraft, 140 N. Linden, Lamoni, IA 50140.

✦ **KANSAS CITY, KANSAS.** March 25–26. The Weavers Guild and Fiber Guild of Greater Kansas City will present KAWS 95 with Rebecca Bluestone. Send a long SASE to Traci Odle, 5601 Birch, Roeland Park, KS 66205.

✦ **BOSSIER CITY, LOUISIANA.** April 21–April 23. Quiltfest '95, sponsored by the Red River Quilters. Lynda Britton, 707 E. Southfield Rd., Shreveport, LA 71105. (318) 865-6916 or (318) 675-6809.



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✦ BALTIMORE, MARYLAND. Through April 16. Starry Nights: Star-Patterned Quilts from the Collection. The Baltimore Museum of Art, Art Museum Dr., Baltimore, MD 21218-3898. (410) 396-6300.

✦ BETHESDA, MARYLAND. March 2–April 15. Fiber Visions, the anniversary exhibit of the Potomac Craftsmen Guild and Gallery Strathmore Hall Arts Center, 10701 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20814. (301) 530-0540.

✦ LAUREL, MARYLAND. June 4–11. Friends of Montpelier and Stitching Pretty, Ltd., present the First Annual Needlework Exhibition at the Montpelier Mansion, 9401 Montpelier Dr., Laurel, MD 20707. Michelle or Denise (301) 604-0808.

✦ WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS. February 25–26. New Traditions Workshops at the Worcester Center for Crafts, 25 Sagamore Rd., Worcester, MA 01605. (508) 753-8183.

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(We have assumed the New Zealand tour formerly organized by Mary Fletcher Tours.)

✦ HARPER WOODS, MICHIGAN. April 21–22. Quilts from the Heart, sponsored by the Quilt Guild of Metro Detroit. Linda Rivard, 56200 Bellford, Shelby Township, MI 48316. (810) 781-5932.

✦ SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO. March 31–April 2. Quilts in Santa Fe: A Biennial Symposium and Bazaar, sponsored by Recursos de Santa Fe, 826 Camino del Monte Rey, A3, Santa Fe, NM 87505.

✦ NEW YORK, NEW YORK. Through February. Quilted Visions: Modern Quilts with Jewish Themes at the Yeshiva University Museum, 500 West 185th St., New York, NY 10033-3201. (212) 960-5390.

✦ BLACK MOUNTAIN, NORTH CAROLINA. June 1–4. North Carolina Quilt Symposium. Workshops, lectures, vendors, Fairfield Fashion Show, and competitions. Send a large SASE to Dorothea Aldefer, 298 Town Mountain Rd., Asheville, NC 28804. (704) 253-8972.

✦ AKRON, OHIO. April 27–30. 26th Annual Stitchery Showcase, sponsored by the Stan Hywet Needlework Guild. Stan Hywet Hall, 714 North Portage Path, Akron, OH 44303.

✦ PERRYSBURG, OHIO. July 29–30. Kaleidoscope of Quilts VII, a judged quilt show presented by the Glass City Quilt Commission. Send a large SASE to Bobbi Bettinger, 5142 Planet Dr., Toledo, OH 43623. (419) 472-8397.

✦ EUGENE, OREGON. April 22–30. Unbroken Thread, a quilt show by the Pioneer Quilters at the Lane County Historical Museum. Send a SASE to Linda Yaeger, PO Box 497, Pleasant Hill, OR 97455.

✦ AUSTIN, TEXAS. February 24–26. Embellishment: The International Bead and Button Show at the Austin Convention Center. Send $3 to Embellishment, 7660 Woodway Dr., Suite 500, Houston, TX 77063.

✦ BONHAM, TEXAS. March 24–26. Norman Kennedy weaving workshop at Fort Inglish. Betsy Ferman, Broken F Ranch, Rt. 1, Box 82A1, Dodd City, TX 75438, or Fort Inglish Society, PO Box 29, Dodd City, TX 75438.

✦ FORT WORTH, TEXAS. May 19–21. Quiltfest '95, Garden Party, sponsored by the Trinity Valley Quilters' Guild, PO Box 122658, Fort Worth, TX 76121-2658. Sandra McCartney, (817) 294-5179.

✦ LUBBOCK, TEXAS. April 2–May 28. The Embroiderers' Guild of America's Fourteenth National Exhibit at the Museum of Texas Tech University. Pat Grappe, 402 Pine St., Levelland, TX 79336. (806) 894-6416.

✦ WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA. February 23–26. Mid-Atlantic Quilt Festival VI at the Hilton National Conference Center and Mid-Atlantic Wearable Art Festival at the Williamsburg Lodge. February 24–26. Williamsburg Vintage Fashion and Jewelry Show. Send a #10 SASE (75 cents' postage) to Williamsburg Festival Week 1995, c/o David M. and Peter J. Mancuso, Inc., PO Box 667, New Hope, PA 18938.

✦ WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, WEST VIRGINIA. March 18–23. The Exemplary, National Academy of Needlearts' Exhibit. Barbara Edmonds, 10300 Cherokee Rd., Richmond, VA 23235.

✦ WAUSAU, WISCONSIN. Through January 8. Beauty in Japanese Quilts at the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, 700 N. Twelfth St., Wausau, WI 54403-5007.

TRAVEL

✦ BRUGES, BELGIUM. May 15–21. Springtime Belgian Lace Workshop. Deadline April 15. November 24–December 2. Autumn Belgium Lace Workshop. Deadline October 24. Point Ground (formerly Beggars' Lace Tours), 124 W. Irvington Pl., Denver, CO 80223.

✦ BOLIVIA. June 14–July 6. Peru 1996. Weaving, hiking, cultural tour. Weavers Trek, Betty Davenport, 1922 Mahan, Richland, WA 99352. (509) 946-4409.

✦ GERMANY. September 9–22. Passport to Germany's Lace-making Centers. Deadline August 9. Point Ground (formerly Beggars' Lace Tours), 124 W. Irvington Pl., Denver, CO 80223.

✦ ICELAND. May 20–26. Wool Camp, a week-long intensive introduction to Icelandic wool, followed by an optional week-long intensive residential weaving or knitting session May 27–June 2. Ned Heite, Box 53, Camden, DE 19934. (800) 777-9665.



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>
> *Ladies' Art Company advertisement,* Home Needlework Magazine, *1899, from* Clues in the Calico, *by Barbara Brackman*

Arkansas Traveler, Alabama Beauty, Bear's Paws, Blazing Star, Cactus Blossom, Confederate Rose, Dove in the Window, Eight Hands Around, Feather Star: the litany of quilt names found in Marie D. Webster's classic quilt book, *Quilts: Their Story and How to Make Them,* reels from Air Castle to Yankee Puzzle. First published in 1915, the book appears to borrow much of its listing from that of the Ladies' Art Company, which published catalogs of quilt and other needlework patterns for almost 100 years. (The company's founding date is given on catalogs as 1889, but that may simply have been the first year the company was required to print a founding date on the catalog; it is known to have been at its first address as early as 1875.) Marie Webster alphabetized the pattern names that the company had numbered in its catalogs, added some names from other periodicals of the time, and included a few designs of her own, but her list is otherwise essentially that of the St. Louis, Missouri, company.

The Ladies' Art Company (which spelled its name both with and without the apostrophe) did not invent quilt patterns but simply gathered and published the patterns and names of existing ones. After the Civil War, according to the quilt scholar Barbara Brackman, quilt names had continued to reflect regional origins, but styles started to become more homogeneous through national publications and exhibits such as the 1876 Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia. In publishing a catalog offering named patterns, the Ladies' Art Company greatly influenced quilt nomenclature and established a niche for itself in quilt history. The company both reflected quilt history and by spreading quilt patterns, helped create it.

The Ladies' Art Company began publishing its catalogs on Pine Street in downtown St. Louis. The earliest surviving catalogs are from the 1880s. Without benefit of the databases, newspaper morgues, and other resources we would expect to use today, the company collected many of the quilt patterns conceived, adapted, borrowed, duplicated, and designed by nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century American quilters.

Pattern names previously had appeared sporadically in farm journals, almanacs, and fancywork instruction books. Many patterns were published without names or under the general headline "Patchwork." A farm journal might offer a quilt pattern or two a month, but the Ladies' Art Company offered hundreds. In 1898, the Ladies' Art Company catalog *Diagrams of Quilt, Sofa and Pin Cushion Patterns* listed 420 patterns; in 1928, the catalog *Quilt Patterns—Patchwork and Appliqué* listed 530. The company published and revised its catalogs for about thirty years, then continued to offer the final set of patterns for sale through the early 1960s, when it ceased to do business.



Cover of the Ladies' Art Company's Tenth Revised Edition of *Diagrams of Quilt, Sofa and Pin Cushion Patterns.*
Courtesy of the Missouri State Historical Society, Saint Louis, Missouri.

Through the years, the Ladies' Art Company offered stamping supplies, thread, quilting frames, and finished blocks in its catalogs (in 1940, calico blocks cost between 55 cents and $1; silk blocks, between 80 cents and $1.70). In 1898, customers could buy a cardboard quilt block pattern for a dime (or three for a quarter), but by 1940, the price for a design on perforated bond transfer paper was 50 cents.

Patterns were added to or deleted from the catalogs according to popularity and profitability. The same block might appear in different catalogs under different names, reflecting fads or regional variants. At the height of its production, the company employed nearly sixty people to fill pattern orders. After World War II, when quilting and other needlework declined in popularity, the Ladies' Art Company also declined.


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Facsimile of the second edition of an 1897 Ladies' Art Company catalog, *Miniature Diagrams of Quilt Patterns.*
Courtesy of Quilter's Newsletter Magazine.

The Family behind Ladies' Art

The company was founded by the Brockstedt family, whose members' lives remained quite private. Henry Brockstedt's parents immigrated to the United States in 1855, when Henry was two years old. The U.S. Census of 1900 shows that Henry Brockstedt, son of a German father and Swiss mother, lived in St. Louis with his wife, Emma, their daughters, Alma and Clarissa, his mother, Altrika, and his sister, Alma. Other census information (before privacy laws went into effect in the 1930s) showed no additional information. Marital records do not reveal a marriage for either daughter. Little else is known about the family or the company. No magazine or newspaper article featured them. Local historical societies have only a catalog or two. City directories show that the family, and with it Ladies' Art, moved about half a dozen times during the years the company was in business, but no fiscal information about the company is available. The catalogs themselves do not reveal who wrote the text or chose items to be featured, such as shade kits for gas lamps.

The Patterns

In the beginning, the Brockstedt children watercolored the cardboard block patterns after school. Each cardboard quilt block pattern would go into a brown envelope marked with the pattern's catalog number, along with cut-out pieces of a matching block to use as a template.

The Brockstedts prided themselves on the patterns' accuracy from the very first catalog, according to the quilt historian and pattern collector Cuesta Benberry. Benberry, who corresponded with Ladies' Art in the 1960s, wrote in the Spring 1971 issue of *Nimble Needle Treasures:* "[A]nyone who has ever actually sewn by an original Ladies' Art Company pattern knows the pleasure of not having to adjust the pattern, as is common with so many other printed quilt patterns."

Benberry's correspondence related to her goal of compiling a complete set of catalogs. (Her comparison of the Webster book with Ladies' Art Company names showed that of 467 pattern names in the Webster listing, only 80 are not Ladies' Art Company names. Of those, 15 are Webster's own designs, leaving only 60 not attributable to Ladies' Art.) Because Benberry's interest at the time was in the patterns and their names rather than the people behind the research and cataloging, she learned little about those who stamped their replies simply "Ladies' Art." She

received a note from someone at the company in 1970 indicating that the cardboard used to make the first patterns had been dated before 1889.

The Company's Influence

Twentieth-century quilt historians clearly have depended upon the Ladies' Art Company's listings. In addition to Marie Webster, Carrie Hall's *Romance of the Patchwork Quilt* and William Rush Dunton, Jr.'s *Old Quilts* (1946) draw on the company's listings. Dunton mentions Marie Webster among his sources and recalls corresponding with Ladies' Art in 1936, at which time a company employee acknowledged that business was dropping off.

The Ladies' Art Company's pattern names have become standard. The patterns printed in the *Kansas City Star,* one of few periodicals that offered a full-size pattern in a weekly quilt column, appear "to have dipped liberally in [the Ladies' Art] 'fountain of knowledge,' " according to Benberry (*Quilters' Journal,* Summer 1978). The paper published 1,068 patterns between 1928 and 1961. Additional quilt researchers who have inherited the Ladies' Art Company's nomenclature include Jinny Beyer, Barbara Brackman, Joyce Gross, Jeannette Lasansky, Penny McMorris, and Wilene Smith. Cuesta Benberry called Ladies' Art a "time-honored patriarch of American quilt pattern companies."

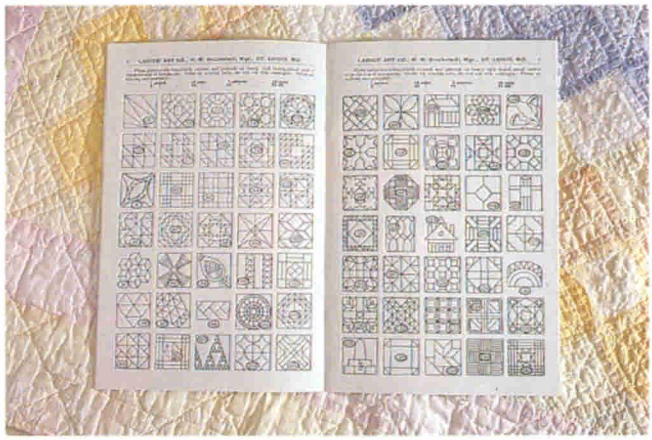
Like the Ladies' Art Company's influence, the litany of names recorded in Marie Webster's book continues: Lover's Links, Maple Leaf, Morning Glory, Nine Patch, Odd Fellows' Chain, Pineapple, Quartette, Robbing Peter To Pay Paul, St. Louis Star, Twin Sisters, Unknown Star, Vestibule, Wedding Knot, The Xquisite, Yankee Puzzle.

About the Author. *Martha Baker embroiders and gardens when she is not freelance writing or teaching writing in St. Louis, Missouri. She thanks Cuesta Benberry for her research and writings about the Ladies' Art Company and for insightful conversations on the subject.*

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Courtesy of Quilter's Newsletter Magazine.

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The Traditional Silk Braids *of* Japan

MASAKO KINOSHITA



Kumihimo obijime given to Masako Kinoshita as part of a kimono set. Inset photograph shows the kimono, the *obi*, or sash, and the obijime.

Courtesy of Masako Kinoshita.



Masako Kinoshita making a traditional kumihimo braid on a *marudai*, or round-topped stand. Two strands are simultaneously transferred by a symmetrical movement of both hands. Here, a twenty-strand "Jewels in a Basket" braid is being constructed. When a stand and bobbins are used, the completed braid can be counterweighted to hang down through a hole in the center of the stand or rise vertically from the stand.

Courtesy of Masako Kinoshita.

I GREW UP IN JAPAN with my parents, two brothers, and a sister who was much younger. We spent summer vacations and winter holidays at my grandparents' house at a seaside resort near Tokyo. Because my grandfather (my father's father) collected Oriental antiques, beautifully crafted objects were always part of my surroundings. I was strongly attracted to them even when I was quite young. It was and still is customary for girls to have a kimono set or two for special occasions that includes a robe and a broad sash, or *obi*. When I was sixteen, I received several kimono sets from a relative who had outgrown them. From the moment I saw them, I was captivated, and I think they have determined my taste in kimono. Their art nouveau designs set them apart from kimono I had had as a young girl. Among the sets were two *kumihimo* cords, or *obijime*, that tied around the obi. Although I thought little of how the ties I had been given were made until I began to weave in the United States in 1969, they were treasured objects. I gave one obijime to my sister and still have the other.

Obijime have been braided by a traditional Japanese stand-and-bobbin braiding technique known as *kumihimo* (literally, "braids[s]" or "braiding technique") since the early twentieth century. At that time, the braid manufacturers, who no longer needed to provide the many braids once used to lace the small plates of rawhide or iron into suits of armor and to make sword belts, turned to making braids for other purposes, such as ties for clothing.

Kumihimo silk braiding was not introduced into Japan until the seventh or eighth centuries, although other kinds of braids had been important in Japan for centuries. The oldest extant braids in Japan today are from the seventh century. Although these examples clearly demonstrate that sophisticated techniques for making braids existed by that time, the Japanese had been exposed to such braids even earlier. In 234, the emperor of China gave a purple band or ribbon made of silk braids to the Queen of Yamatai-Koku, a tribal nation in Japan, and a blue band to her emissary.

The special high value attached to braids long ago may have established early the strong affection for and appreciation of braids that have permeated Japanese culture. Braids have always been both functional and decorative. A sword belt, or *hirao*, worn by emperors, princes, and high officials with their most formal robes, indicates the wearer's rank by its weave and color. Braids have also been used to tie scrolls, trim dance costumes and horse trappings, and even tune musical instruments (braids are attached so that they can tighten or loosen the strings on stringed instruments and thereby raise or lower the strings' pitch).

Traditionally, most kumihimo braids have been made of silk. Cotton was used only as a novelty material. Modern handmade kumihimo are made of fine three-ply filament silk. A single braiding strand consists of a number of fine silk threads grouped together. The braider prepares the strands by winding thread over a measured length on a board; he or she prepares a multiple of four strands, as is required for most kumihimo. One end is knotted, each strand is wound on a bobbin, and the strands and their bobbins are set up over a stand (see picture above).

A Chance to Learn Kumihimo

My educational background in physics gives my interest in textiles a particular focus on structure. In 1973, my husband, a professor at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, began a sabbatical in Japan. Realizing that I wouldn't be able to weave in our tiny Tokyo apartment, I decided to take advantage of the time in Japan to learn kumihimo techniques. By then, I had learned various weaving structures and experimented with them in my weaving, yet the structure of the obijime braid I was first given puzzled me, and I was excited by the prospect of learning to make it. During that year, although the instruction never reached the complexity of my original braid, I learned to make more than twenty varieties of structures with four to thirty-two strands and in various color designs using *kakudai* (braiding-down techniques customarily done on a square-topped stand) and *marudai* (braiding-up techniques customarily done



Braider and embroiderer in *Poetry Match of Seventy-One Pairs of Artisans*, a nineteenth-century copy by Seisen and Shosen Kano of a fifteenth-century illuminated scroll attributed to Mitsunobu Tosa (1434–1525).

on a round-topped stand). I analyzed their structure and thought that they must be the most efficient and elegant of hand-braiding methods.

When I returned to the United States, I published some articles on kumihimo to introduce the technique here, and my interest in kumihimo and in other braiding techniques grew. When I encountered *slentre*, a Danish braiding technique in which one manipulates loops on one's fingers (no tool is used), its simplicity and efficiency fascinated me. One could make decorative braids of ten to fourteen strands with various structures in relatively little time. I was particularly curious about how kumihimo and slentre braids—and the techniques for making them—compared. I investigated the structural characteristics of both kinds of braids and evaluated how practical each was to make.

In kumihimo, the traditional Japanese stand-and-bobbin technique, the strands are manipulated in pairs (by simultaneous hand movements, each hand holding one strand attached to a bobbin). Because each strand can be freely transferred from one position to another, it belongs among the "free-end" braiding techniques. In slentre, each loop (or joined pair of strands) is hooked on a fingertip, and the fiber is kept taut between a fixed braiding head and one's fingers. In this manner, loops can be kept in order while they are transferred and exchanged one at a time between the fingers of both hands to construct a braid. Most loop-manipulation techniques like slentre are finger-held: the paired strands move simultaneously, interdependent but not following an identical path.

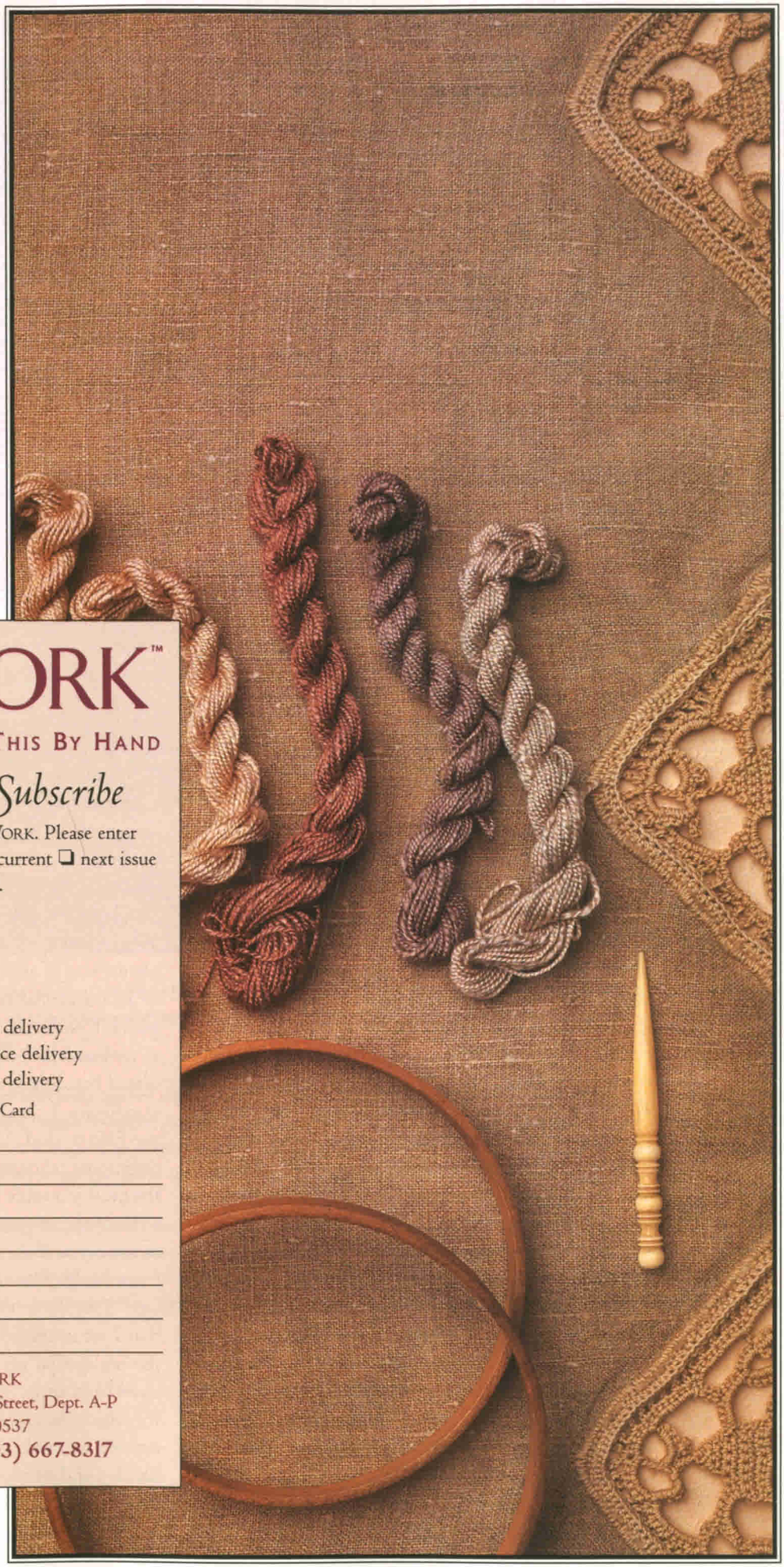
The Clues in the Braids

For many years, Japanese textile scholars have assumed that the numerous extant specimens of elaborate Japanese silk braids, the earliest dating to the seventh century, were constructed by the braiding-up techniques known today as marudai (literally, "round-top stand"; the term indicates both the equipment and the techniques usually used with it). However, as I compared kumihimo and slentre, I realized that some construction details of the old Japanese braids failed to support the assumption that they were made on a stand with bobbins—and even suggested that they might have been made with loop-manipulation techniques. From *Braids in the Shōsō-in*, a book that presents braids from the treasures of the Shōsō-in (the main warehouse of Todaiji Temple in Nara since the eighth century, now managed by the Imperial Household Agency), I learned that out of more than 300 eighth-century square braids, about two-thirds had been made with an odd number of strands times two. This was surprising. The number of strands that braiders would be likely to favor is usually one that makes the structure of the braids most symmetrical; square braids made on a stand with free-end braiding techniques such as marudai would be expected to have a strand count that was a multiple of four (an even number times two). The high proportion of Shōsō-in square braids made with an *odd*-number-times-two strands strongly suggested that these braids were *not* made with a free-end technique. However, in a square braid made with loop-manipulation techniques, an odd number of loops achieves a *more symmetrical* braid.

Realizing that loop manipulation might better explain the strand count of the old braids, I sought evidence of the ancient use of loop manipulation in Japan. The oldest illustration of a braider in Japan, the fifteenth-century scroll *Poetry Match of Seventy-One Pairs of Artisans*, showed a technique that clearly resembled the loop-ma-

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Braiding with a stand involves various steps of preparation. In this method, without using a stand or bobbins, the strands are slipped on around one's left and right hands and kept taut. Since the hands do not touch the yarn, it will retain its luster. Moreover, if this method is compared to the stand method, in the time it takes to fashion a 6-shaku 5-sun (2.5-meter) braid on a stand, a braid of 1-jo 9-shaku 5-sun (7.4 meters) can be made. Because of this convenience and simplicity, it has been designated as a confidential technique. . . . Keep it confidential. Keep it confidential.

nipulation techniques, such as slentre, that I was familiar with, in which the loops are held on the fingers. I learned a little later about "Hiden Itokumi [Confidential Braiding Technique]," a chapter in an early-nineteenth-century treatise, *Shika Suyo [Thesaurus for Ceasing War]*. The technique illustrated there showed looped strands that go around the hands rather than the fingers. This was my first encounter with hand-held methods. I also learned that this technique, which no contemporary Japanese braiders knew, had been practiced in Japan until the late nineteenth century, when it became obsolete. Only one other culture, that of nomads in the Sultanate of Oman at the southeastern tip of the Arabian peninsula, is known to practice hand-held braiding.

Unfortunately, the descriptions of eight procedures recorded in "Hiden Itokumi" were incomprehensible. Because the text stated that the technique was protected because of its great efficiency, I guessed that the instructions were encoded. The passage (above) which I translated, compares braiding with a stand to braiding by hand.

Over a period of about a year, working on the text intermittently, I decoded the instructions. The process involved figuring out the potential meaning of such phrases as "move heaven to earth and then earth to heaven" and then trying them as loop manipulations. The symbols used for each braid's directions were different: one might use the terms "northeast" and "northwest" and another "yin" and "yang." Whenever I got stuck, I recalled that everyone I knew thought that the text was gibberish. I had to overcome doubts to start experimenting again. Eventually, I decoded and reconstructed all eight procedures, along with another recorded in "Essentials of the Braiding Techniques of the Mano Family" (1819), a manuscript manual of kumihimo contemporaneous with "Hiden Itokumi." From these nine procedures, seven structurally distinctive braids can be constructed.

Adding Up the Evidence

Braids historically were used most abundantly on armor and its accessories. A typical fully decorated suit of armor required about 200 pieces of 2-meter-long braids (*odoshige*) for lacing the small leather or metal plates. Nearly eighty additional braids of various weights, structures, widths, and colors, and designs were used to complete a suit of armor.

In the centuries during which warring clans struggled for power, lacing braids were required constantly to replenish and repair armor. Hand-held loop-manipulated braiding is nearly three times as fast to make as kumihimo. I concluded that during the era preceding the Edo period (1615–1867), the loop-manipulation techniques practiced in Japan, which I call *kute-uchi*, were the most plausible methods by which braids were made to meet the staggering demands for armor and to construct most of the other surviving braids.

Although kute-uchi literally means "hand-strap braiding," I use the term to refer to the hand-held techniques that I reconstructed from the two Edo-period records, the braids that my colleague Noemi Speiser and I derived from them (for example, forty-four-strand braids for which directions were not given but which we discovered we could construct together by using our four hands), and finger-held loop-manipulation techniques depicted in the fifteenth-century illustration.



Replicas of some of the historical kumihimo braids, which the author constructed based on ideas developed in cooperative research with Noemi Speiser. The close resemblance of these braids to the originals lends support to the theory that the original braids were constructed by loop manipulation.

From the top: a 72-strand twelfth-century braid at Chusonji Temple, Iwate Prefecture; 132-strand twelfth-century braid at Osaka Shitennoji Temple; the 144-strand thirteenth-century double-faced tortoiseshell braid at Hayatam Taisha Shrine, Wakayama Prefecture; a sixteenth-century two-layer braid with a free-form design at Hase Temple, Nara Prefecture; a 40-strand fourteenth-century braid at Chion'in Temple, Kyoto; a twelfth-century wrapping braid for sutra scrolls at Itsukushima Shrine, Hiroshima Prefecture.

The top three braids are multiple interconnected square braids. They are solid braids with a color design composed of repeats of two portions of different motifs and/or color schemes. The two portions appear back to back on two faces of the braids and periodically reverse their positions. The fourth braid has a double interlacing pick-up design. The outer and inner structures of the fifth braid interchange, creating areas of different color schemes. The original braid of the bottom sample is less than one centimeter wide and is constructed of five interlinked flat braids.

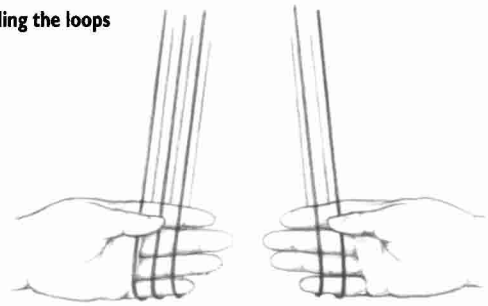
Photograph by A. Gillis.

Kute-uchi: Japanese Loop-Manipulated Braiding

The braider of kute-uchi manipulates the loops on hands held with palms facing the body and fingertips pointing toward each other (Figure 1) while the other ends of the strands are fastened together and attached to a stationary anchor. Each loop behaves as a joined pair of strands, and so each strand of a pair performs the mirror image of the other's movements during the manipulations.

The strands are interlaced by transferring the outermost loop from one hand to the innermost position on the opposite hand. This basic transfer, repeated and alternated from side to side, results in a braid. Variations in structure among the braids depend upon the number of loops, how the loops are allocated on the braider's hands at the beginning of the braid, which of four types of transfers are used, and the order in which the transfers are executed. Variations in color designs depend upon the braid's structure, the color of the strands, and how the colors are arranged on the braider's hands.

Figure 1
Holding the loops



The Four Transfers

As it moves from one hand to the other, a loop may pass outside and around the other loops on the same hand to its new position—an *outside-around* transfer—or inside and through the other loops—an *inside-through* transfer. If the upper strand of the loop remains uppermost after being transferred it is called an *open* transfer. If the paired strands of the loop cross in the transfer so that the upper strand ends in the lower position and the lower strand ends in the upper position, it is called a *cross* transfer. The four possible pairings of these movements are outside-around open (Figure 2), outside-around cross (Figure 3), inside-through open (Figure 4), and inside-through cross (Figure 5).

Figure 2
Outside-around open

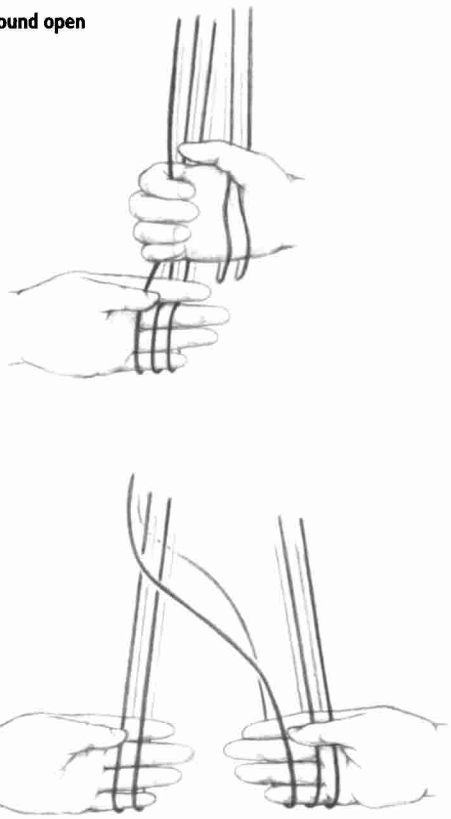


Figure 3
Outside-around cross



Initial Allocation of the Loops

The number, color, and position of the loops when braiding begins determine the appearance and color design for a braid made with any one of the braiding procedures described below. The *initial allocation* describes how many loops a braid requires and how they must be distributed on the left and right hands before braiding begins. The shape of the braid's cross section depends on the number of loops and their distribution.

Hand straps (*kute*) were used to form the looped portion of each paired strand and to keep the loops separated during braiding, making them easier to manipulate. Japanese hand straps are made of twisted and plied paper, sized with lacquer to make them smooth and durable. Each end of the hand strap is tied to a braiding strand so that the strap becomes the loop connecting the strands.

The Braiding Procedures

The nine procedures described below include the eight that I deciphered from "Hiden Itokumi" and one from the "Essentials of the Braiding Techniques of the Mano Family." Each of the procedures comprises an initial allocation of loops and a repeating sequence of either two or four transfers. The transfers are made from the hand with the most loops to the hand with the least when there is an uneven distribution of loops, or from either hand if the loops are evenly distributed, and alternate from side to side. By assigning each of the four basic transfers a letter of the alphabet, we can represent each sequence of transfers with a series of two or four characters: A = outside-around open, B = outside-around cross, C = inside-through open, and D = inside-through cross. Thus, the sequence C D is an inside-through open transfer from one hand to the other followed by an inside-through cross transfer in the opposite direction.

Two-Step Procedures

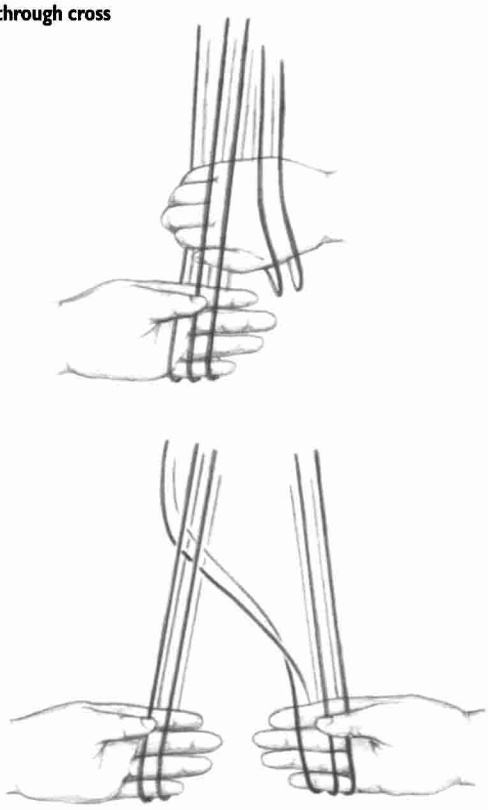
Each of the four two-step procedures requires five or more loops. An even number of loops is divided evenly between left and right hands, and an odd number of loops is divided so that there is one more loop on the left hand than is on the right hand.

Procedure 1 is the sequence A A, an outside-around open transfer from one side followed by another outside-around open transfer from the opposite side. This

Figure 4
Inside-through open



Figure 5
Inside-through cross



sequence produces two two-ridge flat twill braids simultaneously. Procedure 2, B B, and procedure 3, D D, both produce square braids that look the same. Procedure 4, C D, from "Essentials of the Braiding Techniques of the Mano Family," produces a single four-ridge flat twill braid.

Four-Step Procedures

Procedure 5, A A C C, simultaneously produces two square braids. This procedure requires an even number of loops, eight being the minimum. An odd number of loops must be initially allocated to each hand. With eight loops, there will be five loops on the left hand and three on the right. With twelve loops, there will be seven loops on the left hand and five on the right, and so on. Braids with the same number of loops on each hand will have a trapezoidal cross section because the transfers from left to right will pass over one fewer strand on each layer than the transfers from right to left. The uneven allocation will give a square cross section because the transfers from left to right pass over the same number of strands as transfers from right to left.

Procedure 6, A A D D, uses the same initial allocation rules as procedure 5 but produces a rectangular braid which is structurally two interconnected square braids. Procedure 7, A A D C, produces an eight-ridge flat twill braid from seven or more loops. There must be an odd number of loops, with an even number allocated to the left hand and an odd number to the right hand while keeping the greatest number of loops on the left hand. Procedure 8, B B C C, makes an eight-ridge solid round braid or *genji-uchi*. The procedure requires sixteen loops and allocates eight loops to each hand.

Procedure 9, B B D D, produces a different eight-ridge solid braid called a pseudo- or *nise* genji-uchi. It is similar in appearance to, but structurally distinct from, the genji-uchi of procedure 8.

The procedures described above include only a few of the possible two- and four-step combinations of transfers and initial allocation of loops. The Omani nomads mentioned earlier have developed loop-manipulated braids similar to those produced by some of the Japanese braiding procedures. For instance, they use the sequence C C C C with an initial allocation of six loops to each hand to produce two two-ridge twill braids simultaneously. In this procedure, two transfers are made from one hand followed by two transfers from the opposite hand. Another Omani braid uses a sequence similar to procedure 9 with an initial allocation of seven loops to the right hand and five loops to the left. The Omani sequence is B D B D with two transfers (B D) from right to left followed by two transfers (B D) from left to right. The braid closely resembles genji-uchi and nise genji-uchi but is structurally different from both. The difference arises from the uneven allocation of loops rather than the smaller total number of loops.

These nine procedures may have been all that were needed to produce an array of braids for every practical purpose at the time when loop-manipulated braiding was common in Japan. ❖

About the Author. *Masako Kinoshita was born and grew up in Japan. After majoring in physics, she developed an interest in textiles and studied kumihimo in Japan. The results of her research on kute-uchi techniques have been published in the book* Study of Archaic Braiding Techniques in Japan, *which is written in Japanese with an English summary. Masako divides her time between Ithaca, New York, and Japan.*

Masako Kinoshita's book Study of Archaic Braiding Techniques in Japan *is available from Masako, 5 Winthrop Pl., Ithaca, NY 14850, and from LACIS, 3163 Adeline St., Dept PWM, Berkeley, CA 94703. (Cost: $315. Please contact supplier for shipping and handling charges.)*

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Japanese Silk Braids to Make

DESIGNED BY MASAKO KINOSHITA



Intricate silk braids to show off a favorite piece of jewelry or wrap a special gift are made simply by interlacing looped strands of silk yarn.

Jade pendants courtesy of Gallery East, Loveland, Colorado.

ONCE KEPT SECRET because of their great efficiency, the procedures for making these Japanese loop-manipulated braids have come to light again thanks to Masako Kinoshita's research. Hand-held loops of silk yarn move from one hand to the other in a repeating two-step sequence to create these beautiful and functional cords. In this simple interpretation of the technique, the interlaced strands are pressed into place by the braider's foot, limiting the length of the braid to the distance between hands and feet. Our instructions are for a 27-inch (70-cm) braid. The first braid will take about one-and-a-half hours to make, but subsequent ones will go faster when you're familiar with the procedures. After you've mastered these two patterns, you may like to try some of the other procedures described on pages 37–38. We've enlarged the illustrations and added detailed instructions for the two transfers needed for the braids pictured here.



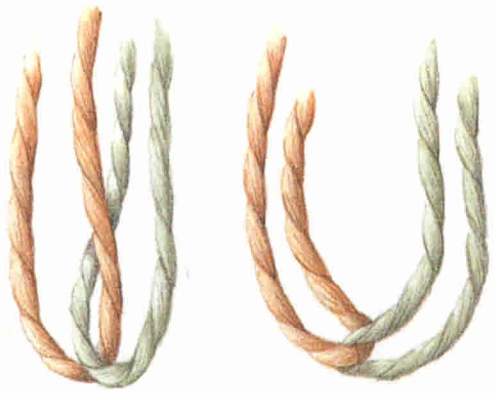
Square braid



Flat braid

Materials

Two-ply silk yarn, about 12½ yards (11 m) color A and 8½ yards (7.5 m) color B. We used silk yarn #II from Aurora Silk, which measures about 28 wraps per inch (2.5 cm) when wrapped firmly but not tightly around a ruler. Any firmly plied silk yarn may be substituted, but bear in mind that the thickness of the yarn will determine the thickness of the braid.
Household string or cord, about 6 inches (15 cm)
C-clamp (optional)
Necklace fastenings (optional)
Fine sewing needle (optional)



Changing the arrangement of colors can give your braids a very different appearance. Try using more than two colors or make bi-colored loops, as shown in this illustration.

Preparing the Loops

Cut six 74-inch (1.8-m) lengths of color A and four 74-inch (1.8-m) lengths of color B. Take two strands of color A together and fold them in half to make one loop and set it aside. Do the same with the remaining strands so that you have a total of five two-strand loops, three of color A and two of color B. Group the loops together, keeping the looped ends even. Tie the cut ends of the loops together, as close to the ends as possible, with an overhand knot.

If you decide later to use finer yarn or to try a braid with more than five loops, you may wish to prepare hand straps to keep the strands from clumping together on your hands as you braid. Cut a 12-inch (30-cm) length of heavy yarn (four-ply wool rug yarn is suitable) for each loop of the braid. Put a drop of white glue, such as Elmer's, 1/2 inch (1.3 cm) from each end of the strap. Tie a slipknot in each end, tightening it over the glue and leaving about a 1/2-inch (1.3-cm) loop. Cut two 37-inch (94-cm) strands for each loop of the braid you wish to make. Tie a strand of braiding yarn to each end of the strap to form the loop.

Find a secure hook, ring, or other fitting about 10 inches (25 cm) from the floor or fix the C-clamp to a heavy piece of furniture or a fixture about 10 inches (25 cm) from the floor. Attach the knotted loops to the hook or clamp with the length of string or cord tied in a loop. While your hands are still free, take off at least one shoe.

Sit on a chair or stool and arrange the loops on your hands as shown in Figure 1 on page 36, with three loops of color A on the left hand and two loops of color B on

the right hand. Hold the loops taut between the clamp or fitting and your hands.

Braiding

When the loops are in position, repeat the prescribed sequence of transfers below for either the square braid or the flat braid. After every transfer, *beat* the braid by placing your stocking foot between the strands on each hand and pushing the interlaced threads firmly with your big toe against the point at which the threads become braid. Consistent beating between transfers ensures a firm, durable braid. Take care to keep the stationary loops in their correct positions during the transfers.

Square Braid: The sequence of transfers for the square braid is D D, or an inside-through cross transfer from the left hand to the right followed by another inside-through cross transfer from right to left.

Flat Braid: The sequence of transfers for the flat braid is C D, or an inside-through open transfer from the left hand to the right followed by an inside-through cross transfer from right to left.

Repeat the sequence of transfers until the braid is the length you want or the loops become too short to manipulate. Tie an overhand knot at the end of the braid to secure the loose ends. Release the far end of the braid from the fitting or clamp. Either knot the ends of the braid and trim the loose threads close to the knot or add necklace fastenings using the following instructions.

To attach necklace fastenings to the ends of the cord, thread the unbraided strands of silk through the loops in the fastenings and fold the ends back to lie against the braid. Holding the fold, trim the ends to about 1/2 inch (1.3 cm). Wrap the braid and folded ends together with a matching strand of silk yarn for about 3/4 inch (2 cm) or until the trimmed ends are covered. Thread the loose end of the wrapping yarn back under the wrapping for about 1/2 inch (1.3 cm) with a fine sewing needle. ❖

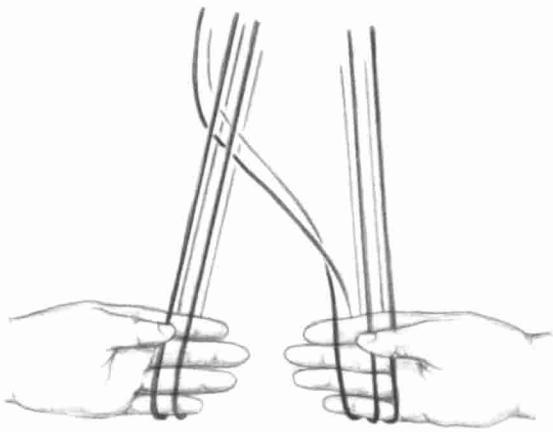
Suppliers

Aurora Silk, 5806 North Vancouver, Portland, OR 97217. (503) 286-4149. Silk yarn #II.

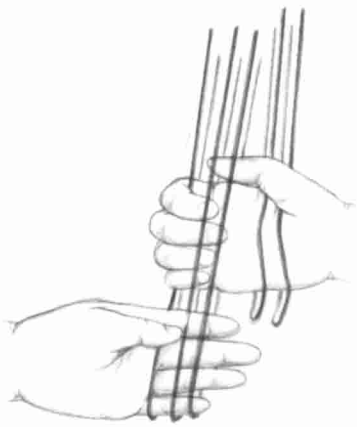
The Lacemaker, 22933 Highway 99, Edmonds, WA 98026. (206) 670-1644. Silk kumihimo yarn.

Textile Reproductions, Box 48, West Chesterfield, MA 01084. (413) 296-4437. Silk yarn #107.

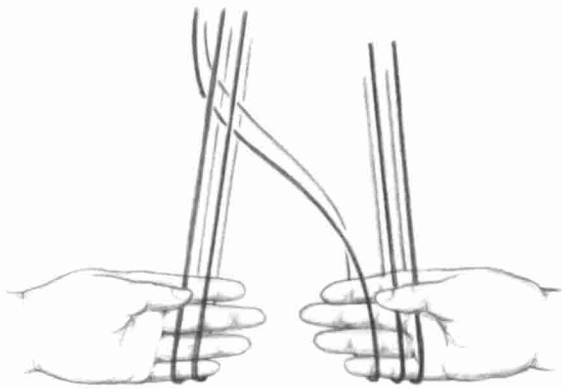




Inside-through cross transfer: **Move your left index finger so that it lies over the leftmost loop and under the remaining two loops, isolating the left loop and making it easier to pick up. Holding your right hand palm down, reach between the upper and lower strands of the left-hand loops to grasp the upper strand of the leftmost loop. Bring your right hand back to its original palm-up position with the transferred loop at the inside position.**



Inside-through open transfer: **Move your left index finger so that it lies over the leftmost loop and under the remaining two loops, isolating the left loop and making it easier to pick up. Holding your right hand palm up, reach between the upper and lower strands of the left-hand loops to grasp the upper strand of the leftmost loop. Bring your right hand back to its original position with the transferred loop at the inside position.**



PERUVIAN MAQUITOS

Colorful Sleeves Knit Traditions Together



Handknitted *maquitos* from Huancavelica Department, Peru, shown with a drop spindle. Left: maquitos for a child. Right: adult maquitos, of hand-spun, hand-dyed sheep wool. Both are from the town of Huancavelica, circa 1920. Knitted on double-pointed bicycle spokes that serve as needles, maquitos are worked either in multicolored stranded knitting, intarsia in the round, or zigzag intarsia. The pattern bands are of varying widths and are filled with geometric and stylized motifs.

Maquitos courtesy of Carol Rasmussen Noble. Photograph by Joe Coca.

CAROL RASMUSSEN NOBLE



The men of Huancavelica Department in Peru wear colorful arm gaiters knitted in a variety of patterns and materials as part of their traditional costume, which also includes a knitted cap, crocheted sash with pompons, and a handwoven blanket. These men are attending the Mimosa Saturday market in the Mimosa camp of the Julcani mine, two hours from the town of Huancavelica.

Photograph by Donald C. Noble.

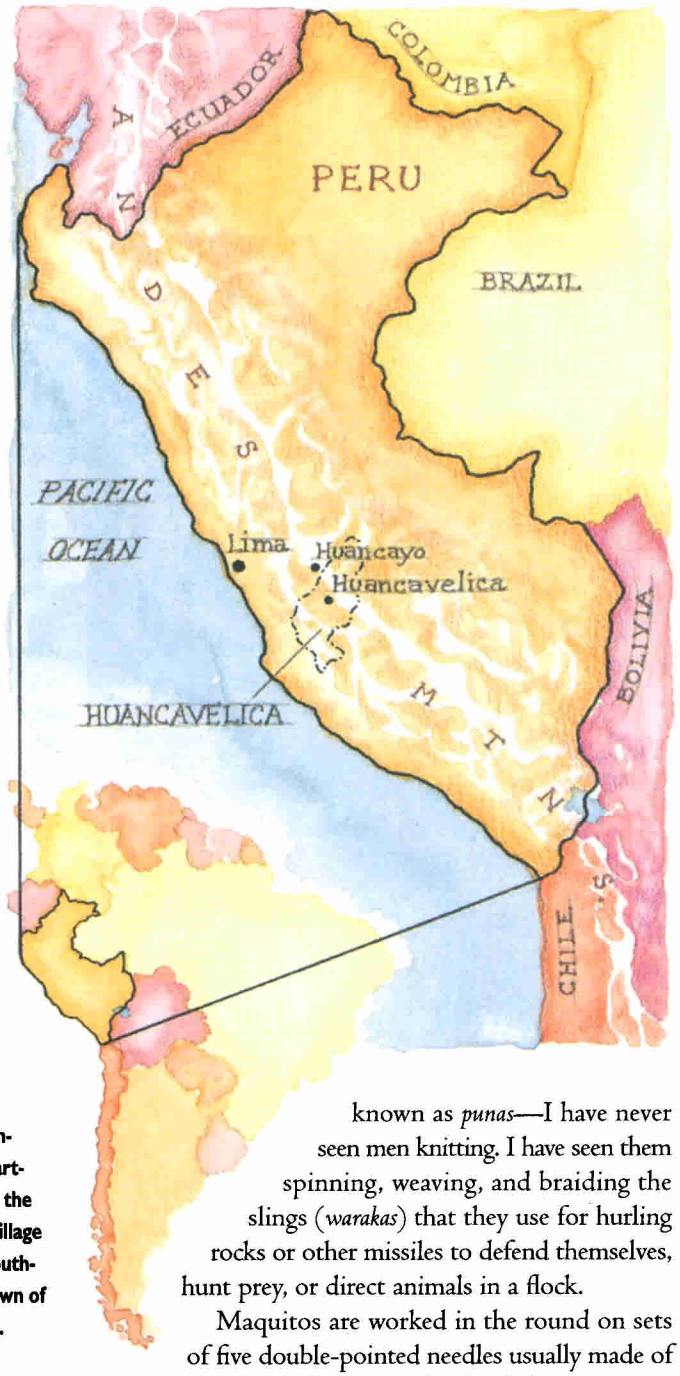
IN THE CHILLY HIGH ANDES OF PERU, *maquitos* provide a man with warmth and a woman with colorful work to do. These handknitted arm gaiters, made by women and worn by men (and previously also by boys in more remote communities), are an integral part of the elaborate indigenous costume of Huancavelica Department, an isolated region in the midst of the rugged mountains and deep river valleys of central Peru.

Sometime after the Spanish defeated the last Inca ruler, Tupac Amaru, in 1572, they suppressed the native costumes in much of Peru and Bolivia and introduced clothing based on the European folkwear of the time. The indigenous costume quickly became a mixture of old and new. It's not certain that maquitos are part of Spanish-influenced costume; however, the invaders introduced knitting to the Andes, and the craft has since flowered into a profusion of these and other beautiful knitted garments.

Huancavelica Department has been and still is the location of one of most elaborate indigenous men's costumes in Peru, one that is much more colorful and ornate than the women's costume of the same area—a phenomenon unique to this region of the Andes. Indigenous men wear bayeta (plain-weave, usually black fabric) jackets or shirts made of other fabrics, intricately patterned maquitos over them, *chullos* (pointed caps with earflaps), as well as crocheted sashes with pompons, and handwoven blankets.

The name maquito is from the word *maqui,* which means "arm" in Quechua, the indigenous language of the area. The Spanish word for "sleeve" is *manga,* and so these colorful gaiters are also called *manguitos,* "little sleeves," or *sobremangas,* "oversleeves." They are conical—wide above the elbow and narrow at the wrist—and are knitted with multicolored figured pattern bands. Maquitos are often worn inside out for everyday work to keep the right side clean for fiestas and market days.

Traditionally, the patterns, colors, and techniques used in his maquitos often identified a man's village and status. The wives who knit them still strive to make each pair outstanding in design and technical execution without ever violating traditional parameters, which generates a lot of competition among the knitters. The women say that it takes a week to complete a pair. Some sources report that men of the Huancavelica region knit their own maquitos, but in all the time that I have spent there—several visits over fifteen years to towns, villages, mining camps, and the isolated high mountain plateaus



Map of Peru showing Huancavelica Department, high in the Andes. The village of Lircay is southeast of the town of Huancavelica.

known as *punas*—I have never seen men knitting. I have seen them spinning, weaving, and braiding the slings (*warakas*) that they use for hurling rocks or other missiles to defend themselves, hunt prey, or direct animals in a flock.

Maquitos are worked in the round on sets of five double-pointed needles usually made of bicycle spokes (as are crochet hooks) or occasionally of wire. Imported steel needles in sets of five are available, but they cost more.

Maquitos are usually tied to a strap, or *huato*, worn around the wearer's neck much like mitten strings to keep the maquitos from slipping down the arms. Traditionally, the huato was woven, but now it is more commonly a commercially produced acrylic bias tape.

Color and Pattern, Old and New

Needless to say, the knitters do not use printed patterns. They carry the traditional pattern motifs and all their variations in their head. No two pairs of maquitos are ever exactly alike. The patterns are a combination of highly geometric motifs and stylized representations of aspects of nature and daily life—animals, stars, lakes, and flowers, for example.

In traditional maquitos, each of the several horizontal pattern bands is divided into boxes by vertical pattern lines within them. The horizontal bands are separated by horizontal rows of solid color or diamond patterns called *dentadas*. The oldest existing examples of maquitos, dating from the turn of the century, contain a limited color scheme of rose, black, white, and dark red wools. The yarn was in most cases handspun and hand-dyed sheep wool or perhaps alpaca, although alpaca is seldom found in maquitos today. Dyes used to color the first maquitos were natural dyes, such as indigo, walnut, cochineal, and lichen, but bright synthetic dyes have been enthusiastically embraced wherever they were introduced for the past 100 years.

Like any other living tradition, maquito knitting has evolved, specifically in the use of color, pattern, and materials. For the past twenty years or longer, two distinct types of maquitos have been made. The first type is still made of handspun and hand-dyed sheep wool. Although they are seldom seen either being worn or in markets, the merchant Sixto Huamán, well known in Huancavelica for having the finest handmade shepherds' clothing, told me that they are worn exclusively by men in the town of Huancavelica. The patterning resembles Fair Isle knitting; pattern bands wider than those in the older versions, often four to six of them, are worked in two colors of stranded knitting (in which the colors change horizontally within a pattern and the unused color is carried on the back of the work). One or two narrow pattern bands are usually black-and-white (the white may be a commercial cotton).

The second and more common modern maquito has five or six pattern bands of the same width (as in the older style) or of varying widths. Against a black background, a profusion of very bright colors is used discontinuously in small amounts, worked usually in intarsia in the round or zigzag intarsia (see "Multicolored Knitting Techniques of the Central Andes," page 48). The pattern is often bisected vertically as well as horizontally by color changes.

These maquitos are knitted in fine acrylic yarn. By the 1950s, commercial wools were readily available in Peru; by the 1970s, the wools were gone and acrylics dominated. The two-ply acrylics, sometimes in dayglow colors, are finer than Shetland three-ply yarn and are

—*continued on page 47*

No two pairs of maquitos are ever exactly alike. The patterns are a combination of highly geometric motifs and stylized representations of aspects of nature and daily life—animals, stars, lakes, and flowers, for example.



Three pair of handknitted maquitos from Huancavelica Department, Peru. Left: handspun, hand-dyed sheep wool, circa 1976. Middle: Handspun, hand-dyed sheep wool mourning maquitos (*luto*), circa 1950. Right: from Huancavelica, circa 1978.

Maquitos courtesy of Carol Rasmussen Noble. Photograph by Joe Coca.



A lone shepherdess knits a sweater for her child while watching her flock on yet another solitary day on the puna.
Photograph by Donald C. Noble.

Knitting in the Andes

Andean women carry their knitting with them everywhere. Their babies and bundles are in carrying blankets (*mantas*) on their back, and so their hands are always free for work. In the villages, women gather at those houses with courtyards—family members and friends alike—to visit and knit together. For these women, knitting is a social activity. For a shepherdess tending her flocks up on the puna, knitting is solitary. She may spend all day alone away from her dwelling watching her animals or fields. All the while, she knits constantly, almost automatically. In the mining camps, women may knit while sitting in a doorway, keeping an eye on the children, or while walking to the company store, bakery, or market, or just to socialize.

The indigenous women of the Huancavelica region knit clothing for themselves, their husbands and children, and members of their extended families. The only knitted article in their own traditional native costume, however, is a coin purse. The women wear voluminous skirts of commercial fabric, a *pullo* (a woven back covering worn under the ubiquitous woven manta), and a felt hat over their long braids (*trenzas*).

Because the climate is cold (the capital, Huancavelica, is at an altitude of 9,121 feet, and the surrounding areas are much higher), everyone today wears a sweater. The contemporary sweaters (*chompas*) worn by both the indigenous and nonindigenous people of the sierra (mountain range) are usually of solid colors with cables and other textural decorations.

Everyone also wears handknitted socks and stockings—the men's richly patterned, the women's plain or lacy. Babies and small children often wear knitted *chullos* (pointed caps with earflaps, like the men's), sweaters, and woven pants (usually of the coarse woolen bayeta fabric) with an open crotch (rather than diapers).

Some knitting yarns are of handspun wool, but if the women have a little money, they often buy brightly colored acrylic yarn in the market. Wealthy women, living in cities such as Lima, may indulge in machine-spun alpaca yarn in natural or dyed colors.

Many women also knit to supplement meager family incomes by selling warm, plain, handknitted socks to the engineers in the mining camps or patterned *maquitos* and chullos in the marketplaces. Some also work in knitting cooperatives and make patterned alpaca sweaters to sell to tourists.

Although knitting is a popular activity with women of all social classes and regions in Peru, many of those who are "upwardly mobile" or live in big cities seem to prefer ready-made clothing to handknitted garments. In small, isolated towns in the sierra such as Huancavelica, however, the tradition of handknitted native costume remains strong.

often used doubled. They can be purchased in skeins, but women also buy thrums in the markets left over from textile factories in Huancayo, a city north of the Huancavelica Department border. They sort, tie, and roll these remnants into little balls with lots of knots. Some commercial cotton or handspun and hand-dyed sheep wool may also be mixed in the finished maquitos—for example, white cotton in the pattern areas and handspun at the edges and in the stripes of dentadas.

Huancavelica is one of the few indigenous areas of the Andes that carries on the tradition of a *luto,* or mourning costume, for men, which is worn for a period of time following the death of a family member. The background color of traditional luto maquitos is black, and few colors are added—usually green, violet, and blue.



Today's Maquitos

Recently, my husband (and co-collector) returned to Huancavelica after a period of almost ten years during which the area had been under the control of the Sendero Luminoso guerilla movement. The five pairs of newly made maquitos that my husband brought back shed a fascinating light on the development of the craft during this time of isolation—both from the rest of Peru and from foreign influence—and sociopolitical unrest.

The old traditional patterns are being used again. Fewer knots and stray ends mar the surface of the maquitos, the tension is more even, and pattern lines are clearer. Vertical patterned and outlined rectangles divide the horizontal pattern bands into boxes, and motifs repeat within and between bands. In general, the color schemes are darker than in maquitos made during the 1970s—more dark red backgrounds and much less use of white. One of the new pairs has a black background with light green and medium aqua in place of white, and muted dark accent colors. There are more pattern bands per maquito in these recent examples as well, and much more detail between pattern bands—for example, double rows of dentadas. One pair, knitted in handspun, hand-dyed yarn, has more black and white and less color, and discrete alternating bands of the same width with the same pattern throughout.

Some examples of these new maquitos are knitted in commercial acrylic, not the fine Shetlandlike yarn used previously but a sport-weight sweater yarn that comes in more and brighter colors. The black-and-white bands are still there, but now in a *tocapu* design, in which the two colors alternate between figure and ground in the boxes making up the horizontal band, as in much Andean weaving. Bands of interlocking scrolls have also been added.



These shaped *maquitos,* made in 1994 following a ten-year period of social and political upheaval, show fine workmanship and detail. Characteristic of the recent trend in maquitos, the colors are darker with more muted accent colors.

Photograph by Donald C. Noble.

Unlike that in other areas of the Andes, which has been in steady decline largely because of increased outside contact, the quality of traditional knitting and weaving in Huancavelica appears, at least in part, to have improved technically.

Isolation seems to be good for the soul of traditional crafts. With exposure to Western ways, Third World traditional handmade textiles often disappear quickly—they are labor-intensive and not economically viable—and people who wear native dress are sometimes discriminated against, as they are even within Peru. My hope is that indigenous peoples be allowed to wear their native dress freely and that native textiles such as the vivid maquitos continue to thrive. ❖

Photo at left: A strap, or *huato,* worn around the neck and along each shoulder, keeps the maquitos from slipping down the wearer's arms. The maquitos shown here are from the village of Lircay, circa 1976. The huato, which is much older than the maquitos, was woven in handspun, hand-dyed yarn in a pattern of geometric figures and birds.

Photograph by Donald C. Noble.

About the Author. *Carol Rasmussen Noble has traveled extensively and collected and studied textiles from South America, Europe, and North America. Currently, she is a writer and textile historian specializing in South American textiles. She has woven, spun, quilted, and embroidered, and is presently focused on knitting.*

Further Reading

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LeCount, Cynthia Gravelle. *Andean Folk Knitting.* St. Paul, Minnesota: Dos Tejedoras, 1990.

Sayán Pizzoli, Guillermo. "Los Maquitos" (Significado del diseño textil). *Historia Andina.* Lima, Peru: Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, No. 6, May 1981.

MULTICOLORED KNITTING TECHNIQUES *of the Central Andes*

PRISCILLA A. GIBSON-ROBERTS

Photographs courtesy of Cynthia Gravelle LeCount.



Peruvian woman knitting in the round with the purl side facing and the yarns tensioned around her neck.

Detail of the same knitter, showing the position of her hands and the working yarns.

THE INTRICATELY PATTERNED knitted folkwear of the central Andean region of South America is worked in stockinette stitch, in the round, usually on a set of five needles. The needles, many of which have been made from bicycle spokes, are hooked at one end and pointed at the other. Most of the ordinary circular knitting is worked from the purl side with the yarns looped around the knitter's neck to tension them. With this arrangement, it takes only a flip of the thumb to position the yarn and needles so that the hooked end of the needle can quickly and easily draw the new stitch through the old.

Where colors are repeated throughout the round, the unused yarns are stranded across the purl side of the work until they are needed again. The stranded yarns are usually caught up by the working yarn and woven into the back of the fabric rather than being allowed to float freely, making the knitted fabric firm and relatively inelastic. Among the stranded colors, there often are small discontinuous areas of contrasting colors, usually called intarsia designs. Because circular knitting proceeds only in one direction with either all purl or all knit rows to produce stockinette stitch, the intarsia yarn is always dropped at the left edge of the design but will be needed at the right edge for the next round.

Andean knitters have two solutions for this problem in tubular knitted garments. Either they knit back and forth using five needles, alternating knit and purl rows and joining the beginning and end of every row to form a tube, or they knit in the round and work the discontinuous colors in a technique called zigzag intarsia. There are three different methods commonly used to join the beginning and end of rows that have been knitted back and forth: the corded join, the knitted join, and the twisted join.

The corded join employs a supplementary strand of yarn, around which the knitter wraps the working yarn at the end of each row, lacing the edges of the knitting together to form a tube. The supplementary yarn is anchored to the edge of the knitting where the corded join is to begin and stretches vertically through the knitting.



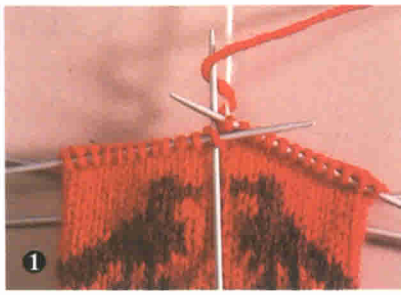
If the supplementary yarn is withdrawn, the cylinder becomes a piece of flat knitting. This join is nearly invisible when the knitter controls the tension of the edge stitches carefully.

The knitted join unites the turning strand at the be-

ginning of the row with the last stitch of the row. Every row begins with a yarn over that is just an extension of the strand of yarn turning from the end of the previous row to the beginning of the current row. At the end of every row, the last stitch is knitted together with the yarn over from the beginning of the row, using slip, slip, knit slipped stitches together on the knit rows and purl 2 together on the purl rows. Because the beginning and end of the rows are firmly knitted together, this join is sturdier and more stable than the corded join.

The twisted join is usually used only when most of the pattern is made up of discontinuous color areas and there are no ground colors stranded across the entire row. The stitches are arranged so that the beginning and end of the row fall at a color change in the pattern. The row proceeds toward the left, and each color is knitted according to the pattern, twisted with the next color to prevent a hole from forming at the junction, and dropped at the left of the motif. At the end of the row, the first color of the row must be loosely stranded to the left across the back of the knitting to twist with the last color of the row. The knitter turns the work and works the next row as before, twisting the yarns at each color change. When the knitter reaches the last color of the row (which was the first color of the previous row), he or she draws the strand created at the end of the previous row into a large loop and uses it to knit the final stitches of the current row. When the color change at the edge of the row shifts position, the knitter slips the intervening stitches, stranding the yarn across the back so that the row begins at the change. If more than a stitch or two must be slipped, the stranded yarn is woven into the back to eliminate the float. Because it matches the edge of a motif and stranded yarns are woven into the back of the knitting, this join is virtually invisible on the front and back.

The second solution, zigzag intarsia, is the technique used in the Huancavelica maquitos featured here. It is commonly used in South American and Middle Eastern knitting (see "The Gift of Bulgarian Stockings," November/December 1994) to work small, isolated colored patterns into stranded-knitted garments. The small intarsia patterns are usually worked among a base of two-color stranded knitting, using short pieces of yarn for the intarsia sections. This is a modified form of intarsia in which the ground color is woven in behind the discontinuous color block of the motif. After each round, the intarsia yarn is dropped at the left side of the design, and on the subsequent round it must be carried over to the right side to knit the design stitches.



❶ Corded join. Wrapping the working yarn around the contrasting white "cord" at the beginning of a knit row.

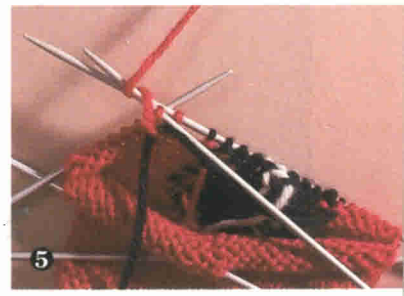






This is the simplest technique for working designs with discontinuous color units, but it is usually limited to small motifs. The zigzag intarsia designs will appear padded because there are at least two additional yarns underneath: the intarsia yarn carried from left to right and the stranding yarn woven in from right to left. See Working the Patterns in the maquito project instructions on page 50 for more information on working zigzag intarsia. ❖

About the Author. *Priscilla Gibson-Roberts is the author of* Knitting in the Old Way *(Interweave Press) and* Salish Indian Sweaters *(Dos Tejedoras). A contributing editor to* Knitter's *magazine, she enjoys unraveling the technical puzzles posed by ethnic knitted textiles.*



❷ Wrapping the working yarn around the "cord" at the beginning of a purl row.

❸ Knitted join. Knitting a yarn over made at the beginning of the row together with the last stitch of the row.

❹ Knitted join seen from the purl side of the fabric.

❺ Twisted join. The first color of the row is stranded across the back of the work and twisted with the last color of the row.



❻ Photo above: At the end of the following purl row, the knitter pulls the loose strand from the previous row into a large loop and uses it to knit the last stitches of the row.

Colorful Maquitos to Knit

ADAPTED BY PRISCILLA A. GIBSON-ROBERTS



Displaying all the brilliance of Andean knitting, these maquitos are knitted in the round using the zigzag intarsia method to work the small spots of bright color that give them their character.

INSPIRED by the child's maquitos on page 42, Priscilla Gibson-Roberts has adapted the intricate knitted patterns and shaping to make a pair of maquitos to fit an average adult woman. Use them for added warmth or for their festive appearance. A challenging project intended for knitters with some experience in multicolored knitting and knitting in the round, the maquitos are worked on five needles using stranded and zigzag intarsia color knitting techniques. If you'd like to sample the techniques without undertaking a whole pair of maquitos, try using portions of the pattern to knit a warm earband or to make the cuffs for a pair of mittens. If you're feeling adventurous, add another pattern band and make spectacular sleeves for a drop-shouldered sweater or jacket.

Materials

Because the quantities of some of the colors are small, we've given approximate amounts by weight rather than balls although the yarn can be purchased only by the 1¾-ounce (50-g) ball.

Rauma Finullgarn wool yarn in the following colors: 1 ball each of black #436, burgundy #488, and white #401; 1/3 oz (10 g) each of light yellow #416, gold yellow #450, pumpkin orange #461, scarlet red #424, dusty rose #466, raspberry #456, dusty blue #438, royal blue #482, lime green #455, tropical green #494, dark green #432, violet #441, and dark purple #474

Set of five double-pointed knitting needles, size 1 (2.5 mm), or the size required to give the correct gauge

Wool needle or large tapestry needle

Abbreviations

k—knit

ml—make 1: pick up the thread running between the base of the stitch on the left-hand needle and the base of the stitch on the right-hand needle onto the tip of the left-hand needle, inserting it from front to back to form a loose strand over the left needle. Knit into the back of the loose strand.

rnd—round

st(s)—stitch(es)

tog—together

Gauge

9 stitches and 10 rows per inch (36 stitches and 40 rows per 10 cm) on size 1 (2.5-mm) needles.

Size

The finished maquitos measure 15¾ inches (40 cm) long, with a circumference of 8 inches (20 cm) at the cuff and 13½ inches (34 cm) at the upper arm.

Knitting the Maquitos

With black yarn, cast on 60 stitches evenly on four needles. Taking care not to twist the cast-on edge, join the ends to form a circle and continue working in the round with the right side facing. With dusty rose, knit 1 rnd, then purl 1 rnd. With dusty blue, knit 1 rnd, then purl 1 rnd.

Begin working from the pattern chart, starting at the bottom and working ml increases where indicated. See Working the Patterns below for hints to help you knit the charted pattern. In the first, second, and fourth pattern bands, the vertical white columns between motifs are embellished with stitched cable spirals. Knit these sections in solid white and work the contrasting colors in chain stitch after the knitting is completed.

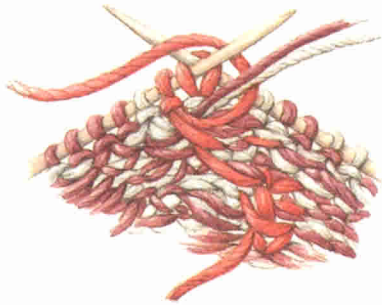
Work the last round of the chart, then continue in violet as follows: (purl 1 rnd, knit 1 rnd) twice. K2tog, drawing up the resulting stitch into a loop twice the length of a regular stitch, * k2tog, drawing up the resulting stitch into a loop twice the length of a regular stitch, pass first loop over second loop to bind off, repeat from * around. Break off the yarn and with a wool or tapestry needle, join the last loop into first loop and fasten off. Darn in all the ends. Work the chain stitch on pattern bands 1, 2, and 4, according to the chart. Knit another maquito to match.

Lay the completed maquitos on a flat surface and steam lightly on both sides by holding a steam iron close to, but not touching, the surface of the knitting. Pat the maquitos into shape and allow to dry flat.



Working a zigzag intarsia design, weaving the ground color into the back of the fabric.





The purl side of the zigzag intarsia section shows the contrasting yarn stranding across the back of the design on every round.

Working the Patterns

The pattern chart consists of five multicolored pattern bands separated by two-colored sawtooth patterns. Work the sawtooth patterns in stranded two-color knitting, carrying the unused color loosely across the back of the work until it is needed again. Each of the pattern bands has a ground color and a secondary color (black, burgundy, or white), both of which are used throughout each round. The knitting will be most efficient if you hold the ground color in your left hand and the secondary color in your right hand. If you wrap the right-hand yarn English style and scoop the left-hand yarn continental style, you can change colors without dropping and picking up yarns. To avoid long floats, which may cause puckering in the knitted fabric, weave the unused color into the back of the knitting every two or three stitches. To weave the left-hand yarn under the right-hand yarn, pass the tip of the working needle through the next stitch to be knitted and over the left-hand yarn. Wrap the right-hand yarn and complete the stitch. On the next stitch pass the tip of the working needle through the next stitch to be knitted and under the left-hand yarn and complete the stitch. To weave the right-hand yarn under the left, enter the next stitch as if to knit, wrap the right-hand yarn around the needle, then wrap the left-hand yarn. Unwrap the right-hand yarn, taking it behind the working needle. Continue the stitch with the left-hand yarn.

Within the ground and secondary colors are small discontinuous areas of contrasting color that are knitted using a technique called zigzag intarsia. Cut a piece of yarn about 3 feet (90 cm) long for each section of contrasting color. Work the contrasting stitches according to the pattern, drop the yarn, and continue the round. When you return to the same contrasting section on the next round, draw up the contrasting yarn, carry it loosely from the left side of the section across the back of the work, and knit the contrasting stitches according to the pattern. Drop the contrasting yarn and continue the round. Weave in the ground yarn on every stitch as you knit the contrasting section to avoid distortion of the stitches where the contrasting section meets the ground color. ❖

Suppliers

Charlotte's Web, 137 Epping Rd., Exeter, NH 03833. (603) 778-1417. Rauma Finullgarn yarn and a Maquitos kit consisting of the yarns necessary for this project ($46.50 postpaid).

Nordic Fiber Arts, Four Cutts Rd., Durham, NH 03824. (603) 868-1196. Rauma Finullgarn yarn and a Peruvian Maquitos kit consisting of the yarns necessary for this project ($46.50 postpaid).



436 black
488 burgundy
401 white
416 light yellow
450 gold yellow
461 pumpkin orange
424 scarlet red
466 dusty rose
456 raspberry
438 dusty blue
482 royal blue
455 lime green
494 tropical green
432 dark green
441 violet
474 dark purple
m1 increase
chain stitch





A NEW ELOQUENCE:

Northwest Coast Indians' BUTTON BLANKETS

JANET CATHERINE BERLO

A JOURNEY TO THE Kwakiutl community of Alert Bay, near Vancouver Island, British Columbia, or the Haida community of Masset, on the Queen Charlotte Islands farther north off the coast of British Columbia, or the Tlingit community of Sitka, on Baranof Island in southeastern Alaska, when a potlatch or community festival is in progress is memorable for the food, the gift giving, and the masked performances. But what lingers in the mind longest is the image of a riot of navy and red capes. Emblazoned with the distinctive animal crests of different clans—wolf, bear, killer whale, and many others—the capes are further embellished with mother-of-pearl buttons, or plastic buttons, or rough abalone shell appendages, or metallic sequins. These button blankets move in the firelight or the spotlight as their wearers dance and make the eloquent speeches so fundamental to Northwest Coast Native American ceremonials.



Dancers wearing button blankets at Kwakiutl Potlatch, spring 1991.
Photograph by Janet C. Berlo.

Button blankets made by Northwest Coast Native women have a long history, yet only recently have they come to be widely appreciated by Natives and outsiders alike as an ingenious and innovative medium for a needlewoman's creativity. Not only are they now purchased by collectors, but there also has been a Native renaissance in making them.

Before the coming of the Europeans in the late eighteenth century, Native American women of the Haida, Tlingit, Kwakiutl, Tsimshian, and other tribes living on the northwestern Pacific coast of North America made clothing out of cedar bark, mountain goat wool, and animal hides. The women of the coastal villages were masters of the complex techniques required to work these materials. Given the length of time that it took to spin, dye, and weave an intricate Chilkat blanket out of mountain goat hair and cedar bark (an innovation of the Chilkat subgroup of the Tlingits, but by mid-nineteenth century made by other groups as well), it is not surprising that the earliest European and American visitors to the northwestern Pacific Coast all report that the imported wool blankets, beads, and buttons were highly valued trade items.

A NEW VOCABULARY OF MATERIALS

Trade with Europeans and Americans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made a profound difference in the way the men from these tribes practiced their own arts. New tools of iron were a marked improvement over indigenous carving tools, allowing them to carve totem poles on a grander scale and with greater ease and rapidity. For the women, it was not innovative *tools* that revolutionized their textiles so much as an entirely new vocabulary of materials.

On his voyage of 1778, the English navigator and explorer Captain James Cook was among the first to bring beads and cloth to the Northwest Coast, along with Russian explorers who sailed across the Bering Strait and down the coast of Alaska. (The Russians first claimed Alaska in 1741, had an extensive presence in the Aleutian Islands in the 1760s, claimed Tlingit territory in 1786, and remained thereafter.) The clothing was so rapidly assimilated into Northwest Coast life that only fourteen years later, another sea captain observed that one chief's family all arrived at a banquet dressed in English woolens. In 1819, a French trader reported that the Tlingit asked for "blankets, but only of good quality, also axes, files, knives, small mirrors, glass beads, handkerchiefs, and other goods of linen and wool."

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Hudson's Bay Company wool blanket had become a unit of currency. Rich individuals accumulated hundreds of them. At ceremonial potlatches at which chiefs' wealth was redistributed, scores of blankets might be given away as gifts.



Tsimshian button blanket.

Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

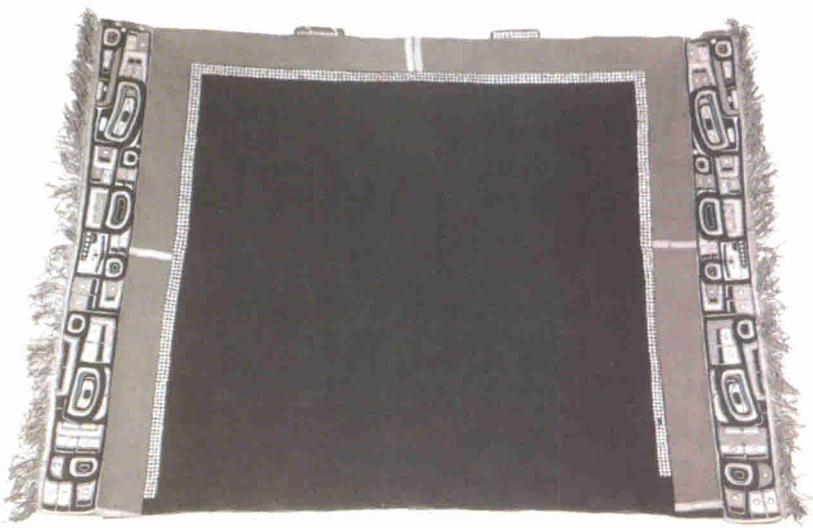
Wool cloth and other trade goods revolutionized Northwest Coast life. The women boldly experimented with woven woolen material, mother-of-pearl buttons, and multicolored glass beads. The prospect of appliquéing layers of cloth in complex designs and studding such appliqué with as many as 3,000 small mother-of-pearl buttons seems time-consuming to us, but to the Natives, this task was a labor savings over the arduous finger-twining of a Chilkat blanket. Moreover, the technical aspects of making the button blanket were easy to master, and the materials were plentiful. As women used these exotic goods, they artistically transformed them so that they carried traditional cultural meanings. Out of cloth they cut family crest designs such as beaver, bear, and killer whale and further elaborated them in buttons, shells, and sometimes beads as well.

A standard format for the button blanket has persisted for generations. Usually, a navy blue wool blanket is ornamented by a red flannel, felt, or other closely woven wool appliqué. Often, red borders line the sides and top of the rectangular blanket, yet individual creativity is evident in the construction of the garment. Sometimes a green blanket or a striped rather than a plain one is used as the background.

Buttons and cloth are conjoined in a variety of ways in button blankets. Sometimes the buttons themselves form the animal crest design; sometimes they adorn the edge of a cloth appliqué. On most button blankets, buttons are of a similar size, but occasionally a needlewoman

Tlingit button blanket with woven Chilkat blanket border, circa 1918.

Courtesy of the Sea Lion House Collection, University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, NA 8506.





Tlingit Indians at potlatch, Sitka, Alaska, 1904.

Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, #328740.

takes advantage of graduated-sized buttons to mimic the distinctive Northwest Coast calligraphic designs. In the nineteenth century, mother-of-pearl buttons from Asia were the most highly prized. However, today's buttons vary from modest plastic ones to dentalium shells to large, irregular pieces of abalone shell made into buttons for the blankets.

Occasionally, strips of woven Chilkat blankets were sewn on as decorative borders (see previous page). While some of the strips may be fragments cut from a whole Chilkat dancing blanket, others were apparently woven expressly for bordering imported blankets.

Haida and Tsimshian blankets tend to be restrained and elegant. Bold red animal designs and a minimal use of buttons reflect the simple yet powerful design aesthetic of Haida and Tsimshian carving styles. Kwakiutl blankets, in contrast, tend to be exuberant and loaded with buttons. Northwest Coast Native American women tailored the appliquéd and button-studded cloth into shapes other than the familiar rectangular blanket. A recently made dance apron is covered

Women's Artistry on Display at the Sitka Potlatch, December 9, 1904

This photo taken at a Tlingit potlatch, or gift-giving ceremony, in Sitka, Alaska, is a visual encyclopedia of the diverse materials that Northwest Coast women were using in their art by the turn of the century. Access to these "alien" goods through commerce in furs and fish had sparked a burst of creativity explosion in women's textile arts.

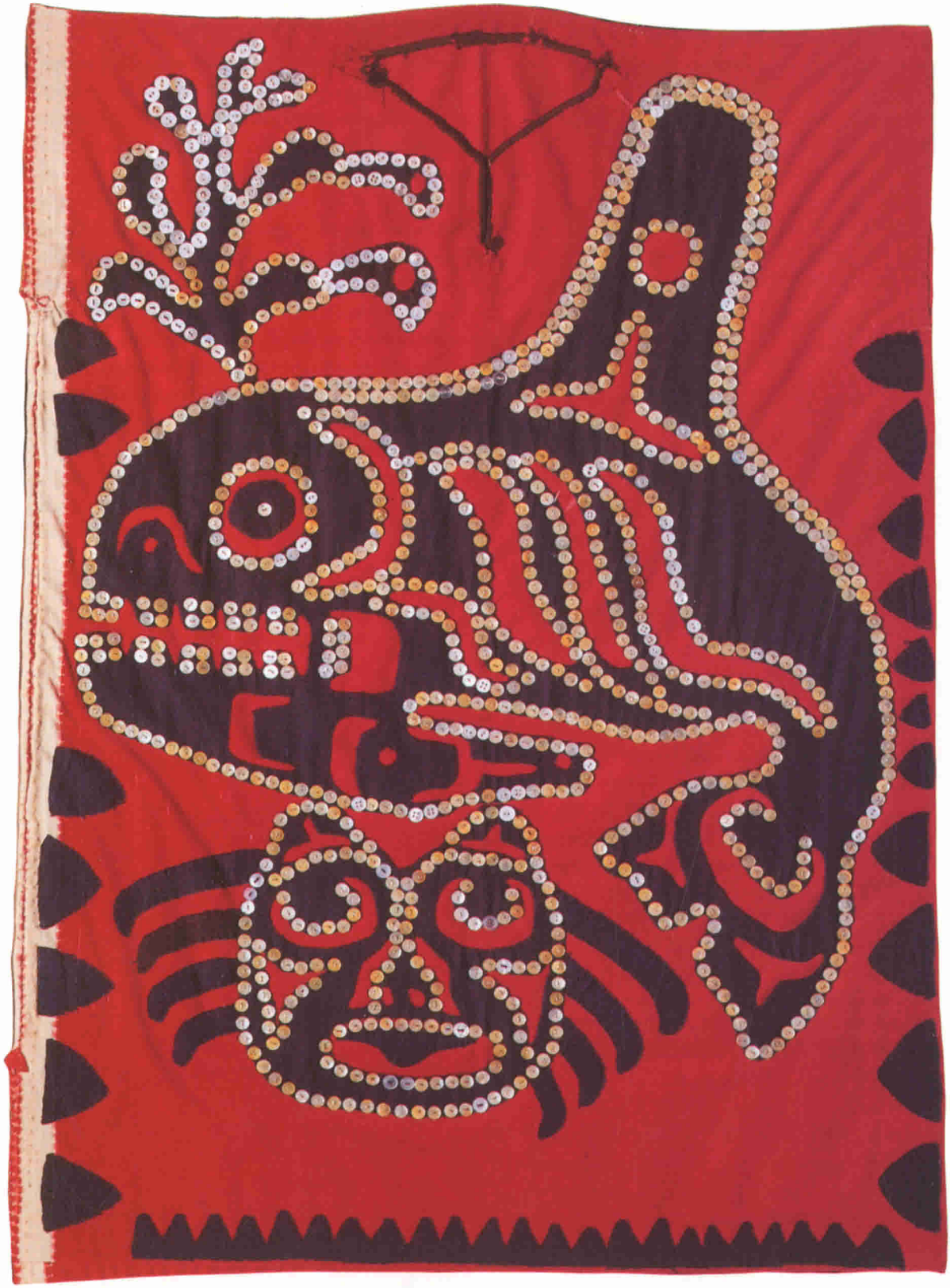
Two men in the second row wear Chilkat blankets. Tlingit tradition tells of their origin among the neighboring Tsimshian Indians, from whom the Chilkat band of the Tlingit learned the complex weaving technique.

The man in profile in the center of the second row wears a button blanket. Three rows of closely stitched mother-of-pearl buttons ornament the seam between the red cloth and the blue border as it drapes over his left shoulder. The man at the far right wears a high-status ermine-skin coat made from at least 100 skins. The style reflects the tailor's close study of Russian and American military officers' garments. Layered over the coat are two beaded "octopus" bags (so called because of the four long "tentacles" hanging down) and an ornately beaded trade-cloth bib.

The woman third from the left in the front row wears a trade-cloth shirt densely beaded in a raven design. Her companions wear octopus bags and beaded bibs. The beadwork designs range from floral patterns learned from Northern Athapaskan women of Alaska's interior to traditional Tlingit clan emblems and eagle emblems obviously inspired by U.S. military insignia (bib, first row, extreme right).

The faces of many of the participants are "tattooed" with paint stamps. The wide, flat-topped hats with hanging beaded fringe worn by several women in the first row are in a style said to have been "captured" from the Russians.

Through the cosmopolitan art of women, the ranking participants of Tlingit society make an emphatic visual statement about their status, wealth, power, and ability to assimilate ideas and images from distant lands.



Tlingit tunic with spouting killer whale emblem, late nineteenth century.

From the collection of S. Thomas Alexander III, St. Louis.

with sequins and beads in the lavish Kwakiutl style (see page 58).

A late-nineteenth-century Tlingit tunic depicting a spouting killer whale has sewn side seams and an open neck. The Tlingit were particularly adept at blending a wide range of goods into coats, robes, aprons, bibs, and shoulder bags. Tlingit ceremonial robes frequently combine button work and beadwork. In many cases, cloth appliqués were first heavily beaded and then sewn to the larger backing. Having closer contact with inland

Athapaskan people than did other coastal groups, Tlingit women may have adopted beads and beadwork techniques through trade with them rather than sea trade with whites.

Unfortunately, the names of very few nineteenth-century button blanket designers and makers are known to us. Although we know from anthropologists, historical photographs, and surviving examples that women weavers often worked from pattern boards painted by men (the same men who carved totem poles and house fronts), we know less about how button blankets were made. Some scholars assume that women executed them according to men's patterns. However, button blankets were a fairly recent art form made of introduced materials, and from the beginning their makers may not have kept to the same fixed, gender-based roles. Today, some button blankets are designed by men and sewn by women, others are designed by one woman and sewn by another, while still others are designed and sewn by the same woman, and an occasional blanket is both designed and sewn by a man. All of these permutations are evident in the blankets illustrated and described in Doreen Jensen and Polly Sargent's *Robes of Power* (University of British Columbia Press, 1986). All of their makers adapted and transformed family emblems that had been handed down through generations. Marion Hunt Doig, a Nuu-Chah-Nulth and Kwakiutl artist whose work is depicted in *Robes of Power,* says of her own work, "I can't explain it. It's coming from somewhere. I have to look over my shoulder to make sure my grandmother is not there, because my hands know what to do."



Kwakiutl sequined dance apron, 1980s.
From a private collection. Courtesy of the University of Alaska Museum.

Button blankets glorify the status and prestige of the wearers. They have been called "robes of power" because they display family crests and totemic emblems that celebrate the spiritual and secular power of certain families and individuals. Traditionally, the robes were worn by high-ranking men and women at a ceremony or feast, which publicly validated their rights to such emblems. Today, they may be worn by any tribe member at ceremonies, museum openings, and public dance performances, where they proclaim clan and ethnic identity.

A Button Blanket Renaissance

When anthropologists collected Northwest Coast art during the last two decades of the nineteenth century for the great museum collections—among them the American Museum of Natural History and the Field Museum of Natural History—they scorned button blankets as debased, makeshift garments unworthy of museum collections, which were supposed to exhibit the finest of the old and the traditional. No one recorded how the makers at that time saw the button blankets, which we now see as a unique instance of acculturation on the Northwest Coast. There, as in many other parts of the Americas, women responded to the effects of

Contemporary Interpretations of the Button Blanket

Appliquéd and button-studded clothing has taken a new turn under the direction of the contemporary textile artist Dorothy Grant. Born in 1955 in Hydaburg, Alaska, Grant began making button blankets in the late 1970s as her contribution to the resurgence of Haida ceremonialism. By the mid-1980s, she was adapting traditional designs to clothing.

Although she had been sewing since she was thirteen and working with her husband, the noted Haida artist Robert Davidson, on his artistic projects for several years, in 1987 Grant took fashion-design courses in Vancouver to experiment further with traditional Native designs in a high-fashion context. The result? A superb collection of couture clothing based on traditional Northwest Coast designs and incorporating the colors and materials of button blankets. Her dresses have a circular, detachable portion that can be worn either as an overskirt or a cape. Dorothy Grant has said of the button blanket that it is "the symbol of progressive tradition, identity, and ritual." In her work, she has kept tradition moving along the path traveled by many generations of Northwest Coast women before her, who also merged tradition and innovation using buttons and blankets.

cultural change with a creative explosion of inventive textile works.

During the first half of the twentieth century, button blankets (like most other Native art forms) continued to be devalued by Native and white alike. The more assimilated Natives saw the blankets as old-fashioned, and many accepted the valuation of the white culture. The Haida artist Florence Davidson told the anthropologist Margaret Blackman that in 1952 she was the first woman in Masset in many years to make a button blanket:

> I kept it secret because I thought someone might laugh at me for doing such an old-fashioned thing. They thought nothing of button blankets during my time. My grandmother used to cut buttons off her button blankets and give them to my sisters and me. As soon as we got babies she'd give us a big bunch of small buttons for baby clothes. When I was a little girl and people did Indian dances, most of them used shawls, wool shawls, when they danced, not button blankets. Now everyone uses button blankets again.

The improvisations in women's textile arts reveal an aesthetic that has come to be appreciated only in recent years. Whereas our turn-of-the-century predecessors saw only the debasement of an earlier textile tradition, we can appreciate the female artist as a *bricoleur,* to use the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss's term: a craftsperson who, while working with a heterogeneous assortment of materials, reveals an improvisational brilliance.

The past thirty years have witnessed a resurgence in making button blankets (along with many other Northwest Coast art traditions). Today, women who make such garments are valued for their works, which serve as emblems of ethnic identity and female creativity. Frida Diesing, who is a Haida carver and printmaker as well as an artist in cloth, designed and sewed the blanket shown (upper right). It depicts an eagle, the artist's clan emblem. Ordinarily, the design is made of red cloth sewn onto the background ground cloth and trimmed with buttons. Here, the artist has inverted that order: a narrow band of red cloth was first appliquéd to the background cloth and buttons were sewn on the band, in places almost obscuring it. The buttons are of graduated sizes, so that the elegant curving lines vary in width like calligraphy.

Many women make button blankets, tunics, and dance aprons (worn during a ceremonial dance) for themselves, for their extended families, and as gifts to honor an individual at a ceremonial occasion. Some work on commission for collectors and museums. Just as early in the nineteenth century the Native women welcomed the coming of buttons and cloth as labor-saving, today their descendants embrace shortcut techniques such as Speed Sew adhesive to tack down the fabric and make the sewing go more quickly. Button vests, which may have family crests on them when made for Native wearers, are also made with general designs for sale to outsiders. The interconnections come full circle as we buy from Tlingit and Kwakiutl artists the objects they and their grandmothers have been fashioning out of the raw materials of the white culture for nearly 200 years. ❖



Haida button blanket by Frida Diesing, 1985.

Courtesy of the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

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T·R·A·P·U·N·T·O
A Gift of Light and Shadow

MARTHA BAKER

IN 1850, JOHN ROBERT DEGGE, a harness maker from St. Petersburg, Illinois, designed a white cradle quilt for his sixteen-year-old wife, Mary, to sew for their firstborn, a daughter. On the wholecloth (one-piece) quilt, now in the Illinois State Museum, he drew a vase in the center and filled it with flowers. In each corner of the quilt he placed a pineapple on a set of spiky leaves. Around the border he described deep swags, each made of two fernlike fronds curving from a central blossom, and into each arc he nested a grape cluster. At sixteen, Mary Frances Degge was an expert quilter. On this quilt, with white thread, she stitched quilting lines an eighth of an inch apart, an average of eleven stitches to the inch. To emphasize the motifs of the design, she inserted extra cotton batting in those areas of the quilt through small holes in the back, a technique known as trapunto (Italian for "quilt," according to the quilt historian Barbara Brackman). She moved the threads of the backing cloth aside, stuffed the motifs, and moved the threads back with such skill that it is difficult to tell the front of the quilt from the back.

Among the thousands of colorful quilts at the Illinois State Museum, the subtle beauty of this small white wholecloth quilt caught my eye. Although made in the mid-nineteenth century, it represents the continuation of a technique and a tradition that began at least 450 years earlier. Because of the precise work involved and their refined appearance, trapunto quilts have been offered as gifts and commemorations of special events as long ago as the fourteenth century.

The oldest examples of trapunto are three large, elaborately quilted beige linen bedcovers that Pietro di Luigi Guicciandi and Laodamia Acciaiuli, members of Sicilian aristocracy, received as wedding gifts about 1392. Pieced and back stitched with brown linen thread, the Sicilian quilts tell of the chivalrous deeds of the legendary medieval knight Tristram and of his immortal love for Isolde. Cotton padding inserted between the two layers of fabric emphasizes the ships, castles, knights, descriptions in Sicilian dialect, and other details in what Averil Colby, the author of *Quilting*, calls a "vast sampler of trapunto."

The Form and the Fashion

The earliest quilting developed out of a need for warmth and protection. Multiple layers of fabric stitched together, known as wadded quilting, make a warmer covering than a single layer of fabric. Heavily padded, quilted armor was worn by European warriors in the eleventh through fifteenth centuries. By the fourteenth century, however, trapunto, a more lightweight form of padded, raised quilting, decorated garments, household linens, and wall hangings.

Whereas ordinary quilts consist of two layers of fabric sewn together with a layer of padding between them, trapunto quilts consist of just two layers of fabric with raised areas stuffed with cotton or wool to enhance the design. In the warm climate of Sicily, where the technique is believed to have originated, additional padding for warmth would usually have been unnecessary. (In some modern trapunto variations, a third layer—extra padding or an extra backing fabric—is added to create varied effects.)

In traditional trapunto quilting, two layers of fabric are basted together and the design outlined in a back stitch or a running stitch that goes through both layers, usually with a thread that matches the top fabric. Padding is then added between the two layers in the design areas to be raised, either by inserting it through a hole poked between threads in a loosely woven backing fabric (open-weave stuffing), or through a slit cut in the backing fab-



Wholecloth all-white trapunto quilts, known as whitework, were popular gifts and commemorative pieces in nineteenth-century America. This cotton wholecloth cradle quilt was designed by John Robert Degge and stitched by Mary Frances Degge in Petersburg, Illinois, circa 1850–1853. 46½ x 39 inches.

Courtesy of the Illinois State Museum, Springfield, Illinois. Gift of Catherine Degge Mars.

ric (cut-back stuffing). Quilters conceal the hole by simply moving the threads back into position or cover slits with long stitches.

Although linen was the fabric used in the earliest quilting, by the sixteenth century, wools, cottons, Persian silk, taffeta, and satin were being used; colored and metallic threads had become more popular for the quilt tops; twilled cotton, fustian (a strong cotton and linen fabric), linen, and silk had been introduced as backing materials; various embroidery stitches had been incorporated into the work; and new raised techniques developed. A variation known as cording (also known as Italian, English, or Portuguese quilting) became popular during this time. A single or double strand of cord or yarn is drawn through two parallel lines of quilting to produce the raised design. Some of the traditional quilting designs still used today, such as the rose, fern, beehive, feather, and diamond, were developed during this period.



This detail from a Sicilian quilt depicts scenes from the medieval legend of the knight Tristram. Figures of knights and princes, elegant ladies, heralds, vines, leaves, and lettering in Sicilian dialect were created in trapunto, circa 1392.
Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, trapunto's European heyday, stuffed and corded stitching was found on everything the wealthy wore, sat on, slept on, or used to keep the sun out. Stumpwork, a related technique of layering embroidery stitches to build relief figures, also became fashionable during these centuries. Eventually, decorative raised quilting was evident on all well-to-do men's, women's, and children's fashions.

Trapunto in America

Europe's economic depression and the whims of fashion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries brought the fancywork to flourishing America. Trapunto, unlike other forms of quilting in America, which were born of necessity and frugality, was practiced as a leisure art of a class wealthy enough to have time for such painstaking, nonfunctional needlework. Lightweight fabrics such as handwoven and handspun cotton were used until the Industrial Revolution made a wider variety of fabrics available. Unlike trapunto in Europe, the technique was not often used for entire garments or household items, but rather for garment details, bed furnishings, and display or specialty quilts. Whereas wool and cotton were the stuffing materials common in Europe, American trapunto designs might also be stuffed with straw, feathers, candlewick, or fabric scraps.

Among the signal trapunto quilts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the stuffed and corded all-white wholecloth coverlets known as whitework most grandly exploit the light and shadow of raised and flat quilting. Until the nineteenth century, these popular quilts (and their machine-woven imitations) were called Marseilles quilts because of their origin in seventeenth-century France. In *America's Glorious Quilts,* Laura Fisher describes whitework as "a wholecloth coverlet on which the top consists of one or more loom-widths of fine white cotton atop a backing of coarser linen," although tops were also made of linen. Only the best needleworkers, such as Mary Frances Degge, attempted the exquisite stitching necessary to create the bas-relief effects and fill the expanse of white cotton fabric with texture.

Popular motifs of the nineteenth century included not only the pineapples, feathers, bows, and trailing vines (often raised by cording) that had been popular in Europe, but also uniquely American scenes and elements such as eagles and stars.

One of the best-known all-white quilts is Virginia Ivey's *A Representation of the Fairground near Russellville, Kentucky.* Sewn about 1856, the quilt commemorates Ivey's beloved community and celebrates the American country fair. She lived in Logan County, Kentucky, and was named for the home state of her father, who fought with Andrew



An example of a patchwork-and-trapunto American quilt, early nineteenth century. The quilt has been turned back to show the ends of the cording.

Courtesy of Maury Bynum. Photograph by Joe Coca.



At the center of her quilt *A Representation of the Fairground near Russellville, Kentucky*, Virginia Ivey stitched a trapunto judging ring with a rail fence and surrounding rings of horses, pigs, men, sheep, and buggies. Another raised fence lines the borders, enclosing the horses and buggies parked in a forest of trees. 94½ x 94 inches, including 4½-inch fringe.

Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans in 1812. Ivey won numerous cups and ribbons at county and state fairs for her skill with a needle. She sewed about 150 stitches in every square inch of the Fairground Quilt (94½ × 94 inches) for a total of an estimated 1.2 million stitches.

In 1860, as a gift for her granddaughter Sallie, Jemima Ann Thewitts Williamson Cook of Fairfield County, South Carolina, stitched the Secession Quilt, an equally remarkable, elaborately patterned all-white quilt that measures 108 inches square. According to the quilt historians Patsy and Myron Orlofsky, Cook pulled the seeds from the cotton by hand, bleached the fine cambric cloth, and hand-carded the wool for stuffing her original design, which expressed her heartfelt support for the Confederacy.

In addition to celebrating special events, American quilts were also vehicles for expressing strong political or patriotic points of view. The central image on Jemima Cook's quilt is an eagle with wings outstretched over two cornucopias of cascading fruit and flowers. The goddess of liberty stands on the eagle's back and "Secession" and "1860" float over the stars. Among the flowers and beadings are the names of governors as well as the state seal. (The Orlofskys recount that as Sherman's army neared their home, Cook's granddaughters Sallie and Rebecca enshrouded the family's treasures in the quilt and buried them. The quilt survived but was badly soiled, and after repeated washings the carefully wrought figures were blurred.)

By the mid-nineteenth century, patchwork and appliqué had become more popular than trapunto quilting techniques, and these were combined with trapunto to create a variety of effects. Virginia Ivey created an appliqué-and-trapunto quilt with stuffed images of her fellow Kentuckians Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson.

Sicily to Chicago: Trapunto Today

By the beginning of the twentieth century, machine-sewn spreads, patchwork coverlets, and wool blankets were becoming more common. The neglect of handwork combined with the dearth of materials during World War I and the marketing of "easy sewing" after World War II led to the decline of fancywork such as trapunto.

Today, a few quilters practice the technique whose long history winds through the days of Civil War America and Tudor England and unfurls back to fourteenth-century Sicily. In the late 1970s, more than a century after trapunto's popularity had dimmed in this country, the artist Judy Chicago created *The Dinner Party*, a massive triangular work measuring 48 feet on each side, which celebrates the contributions of thirty-nine women throughout history. Each woman is represented by a place set at the triangular table.

The dinner mat under the plate of each of the thirty-nine featured women was fashioned to suit each woman's time and spirit. After studying the fourteenth-century Sicilian quilts, Chicago designed a tree of life on the dinner mat of the eleventh-century Italian gynecologist and obstetrician Trotula, a symbol of the physician's philosophy of health care. Blending old traditions with new subjects and styles, parts of the tree are stuffed with



In nineteenth-century America, patchwork and appliqué quilting techniques were often combined with trapunto. This American quilt, circa 1809, was made from fabric attributed to the mills of John Hewson. The printed border cotton formed two frames, one within the other. Elements of the print—birds, butterflies and flowers—were appliquéd in the center field. Between the colorful frames, the quilter stuffed white circlets of leaves. 116⅓ x 112¼ inches.

Courtesy of the Saint Louis Art Museum.

cotton batting and cord; other parts are appliquéd and embroidered. Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* links women of the past to women of the present, and in her trapunto placemat, links medieval Italy to modern America through a long tradition of trapunto gifts and commemorations. ❖

About the Author. *Martha Baker, of St. Louis, Missouri, embroiders, gardens, writes, and teaches writing.*

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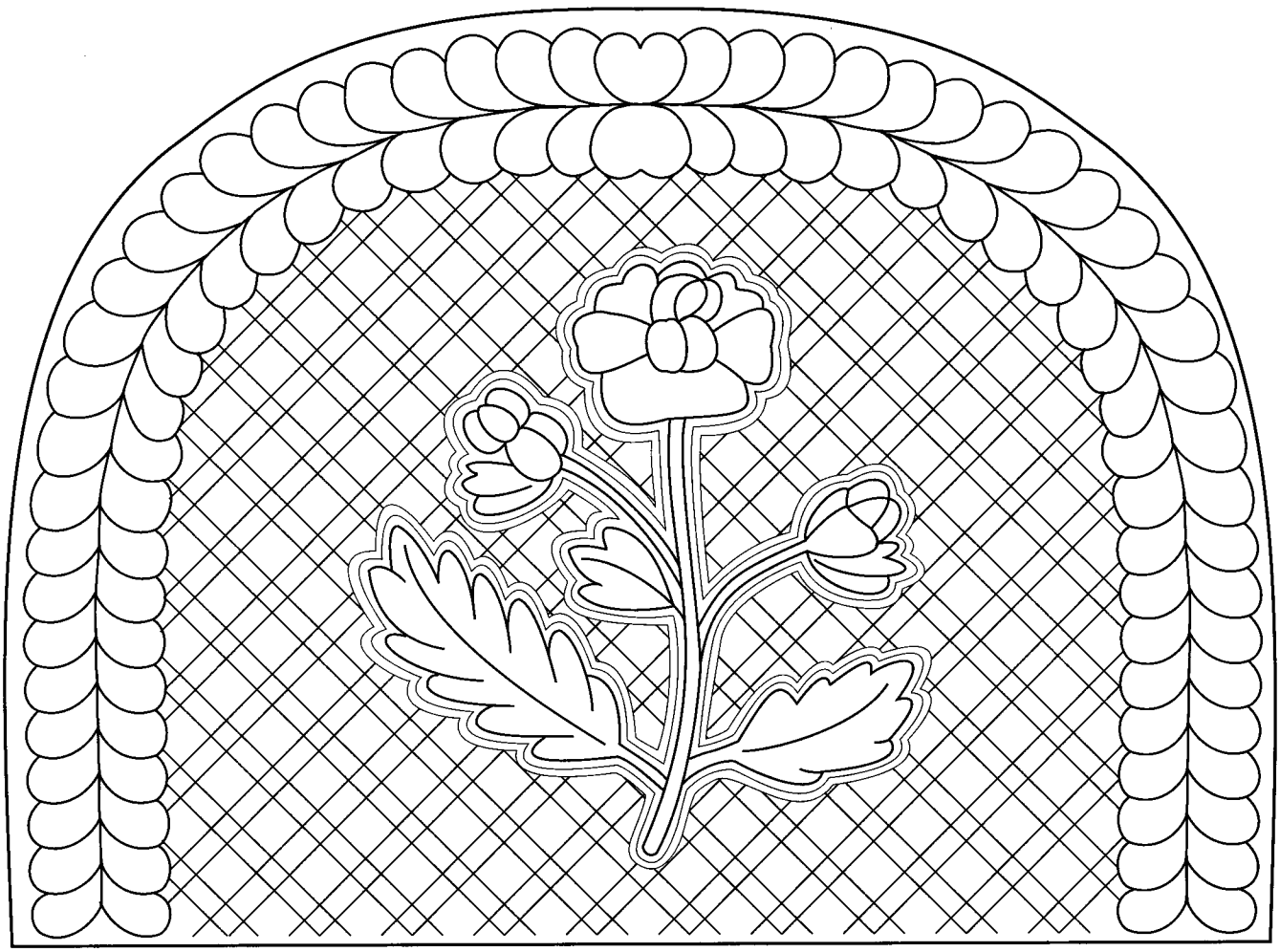
A Trapunto Tea Cozy to Quilt

DESIGNED BY MARILYN ROBINSON



The elegant and timeless designs of traditional trapunto quilting are reflected in a quilted and stuffed tea cozy. *Teapot, sugar bowl, napkin, and basket courtesy of The Cupboard, Fort Collins, Colorado.*

ADD FURTHER PLEASURE to the ceremony of teatime with Marilyn Robinson's elegant trapunto tea cozy. As in traditional quilting, the tea cozy is built on a foundation of batting sandwiched between two layers of plain cotton fabric. The entire design is first quilted with running stitches, and then extra padding is added to the floral sprig and feather border to give it a sculptured look. If you're not already comfortable with the basics of quilting, we suggest that you learn how to assemble and stitch layers of fabric and batting first. The tea cozy will then make an excellent introduction to trapunto.



Materials

1½ yards (1.4 m) of 45-inch (114-cm) white cotton fabric, washed and pressed
Water-soluble fabric marker or fabric pencil
White quilting thread
Between quilting needle, size 10
Low-loft polyester batting, such as Fairfield Low Loft or Hobbs Poly Down, 2 pieces 18 × 21 inches (46 × 53.5 cm)
White four-ply acrylic knitting yarn or three-ply acrylic baby yarn, 1 ball
Doll-making needle
Tapestry needle threader

Preparing the Foundation

Cut 18 inches (46 cm) of the fabric and set it aside for the lining. Cut four rectangles 18 × 21 inches (46 × 53.5 cm) from the remaining fabric.

Enlarge the pattern by copying it on a photocopier at 200 percent or by redrawing it at twice the size. Tape the enlarged pattern to a window, center one of the fabric rectangles over the pattern, and trace the pattern onto the fabric with fabric marker or pencil. Repeat for a second fabric rectangle.

Make a front and a back, each consisting of a rectangle of plain fabric topped with a layer of batting and finally the fabric with the drawn pattern. Baste the three layers together with parallel lines of horizontal, vertical

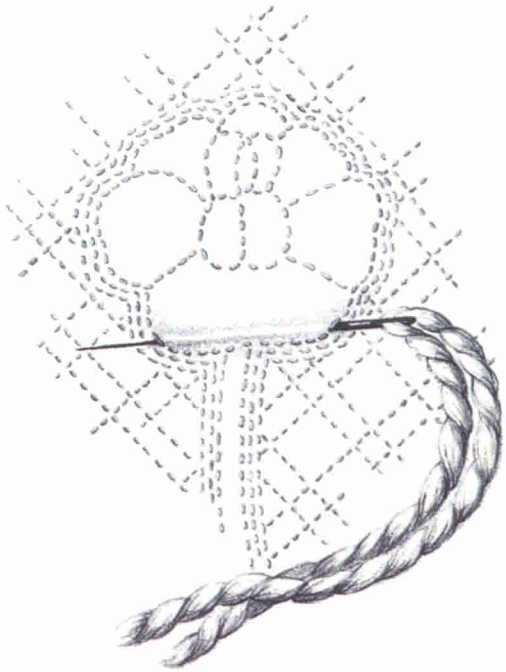


Figure 1

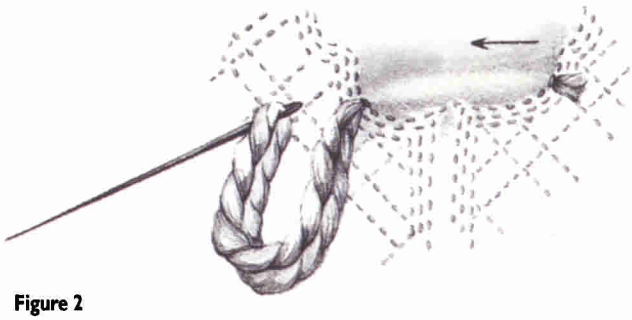


Figure 2

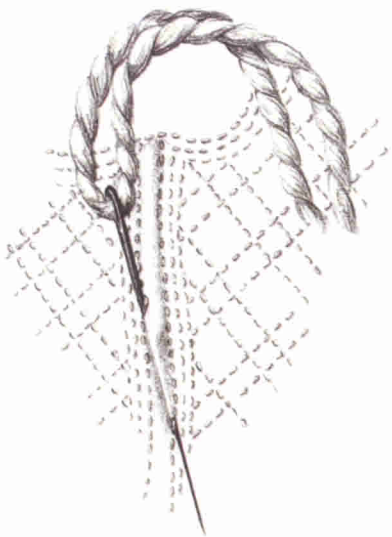


Figure 3

and diagonal basting placed about 3 inches (7.5 cm) apart. Baste along the upper and lower seam lines. Quilt the front and back along all pattern lines with small, even running stitches. When the quilting is finished, remove all except the seam-line basting.

Stuffing the Pattern

Cut a piece of acrylic yarn 16 inches (40 cm) long. If you are using four-ply yarn, divide the yarn into two strands of two plies each. Thread the doll-making needle with the yarn so that the ends of the yarn are even. Select one of the enclosed shapes making up the central floral sprig to stuff.

It is usually most efficient to lay the stuffing yarn parallel to the long axis of a shape but you can place the yarn in whatever direction will allow you to stuff all parts of an area most effectively. With right side facing, insert the needle through the top layer of fabric on one of the shorter sides of the shape so that the hole made by the needle is underneath a quilting stitch. Run the needle between the top layer and the batting, parallel to the long axis of the shape. At the opposite edge, bring the needle to the right side underneath a quilting stitch (Figure 1). Pull the yarn until the ends just disappear beneath the top layer of fabric, then cut the yarn close to the fabric where it emerges (Figure 2). If the yarn is still showing, insert the tip of the needle under the top layer of fabric close to the yarn and pull the ends of the yarn beneath the fabric. Holes left by the needle can be erased by stroking the tip of the needle over the hole until the fabric threads come together. Continue to insert double strands of yarn, adjacent to one another, working across the shape until it is full.

To stuff the stems, start at one end and lay a double strand of yarn as far as you can reach with the needle before the stem curves away. Bring the needle to the right side underneath a quilting stitch at the side of the stem. Pull the ends of the yarn beneath the top layer of fabric, clip the yarn, and begin a new length of yarn 1/4 inch (6 mm) behind the exit point of the previous strand (Figure 3). Stuff the length of the stem with overlapping lengths of yarn. Stuff all the elements of the central floral sprig and then the feather border around the outside. There is no stuffing in the background area.

TIPS FOR TRAPUNTO

The tea cozy project describes only one of several different methods for stitching and stuffing trapunto quilting. These hints apply to a wider range of trapunto techniques.

* Choose a tightly woven top fabric to highlight the interplay of light and shadow produced by the raised surface.
* If you plan to stuff from the back of the work, choose a less tightly woven backing so that it will be easy to open the threads or cut through the backing to insert the filling.
* Clamp the fabric in a quilting hoop, or smooth the fabric often to keep puckers from forming.
* Match the color of the thread to that of the top fabric. Regular sewing thread is fine for small pieces, but sturdier quilting thread is better for large projects.
* You may use running stitch or back stitch to quilt the pattern. Running stitch may be drawn and worked from the front or back of the piece. For back stitch, draw the pattern on the top fabric and backstitch to cover the lines.
* Stitch evenly, with either stitch, about six to eight stitches to the inch.
* To work open-weave stuffing, hold a pointed tool, such as a slightly sharpened notched orange stick or a smooth wooden toothpick with the tip broken off, parallel with the backing fabric and gently separate the weave. Make the hole slightly larger than the tool you'll use to insert the stuffing. Stuff the cavity with small pieces of loose fill, and nudge the threads gently back into place with the pointed tool.
* To work cut-back stuffing, cut a slit large enough to work with, but stay at least 1/4 inch (6 mm) from the outline stitches. Insert the filling through the slit with an orange stick, popsicle stick, or other blunt-tipped bodkin, or with your fingers. For large areas, cut a piece of filling the same size and shape as the area you are stuffing. After filling the area, sew the slit together with large stitches, catching some of the filling in the stitches. You can alternatively close the slit with iron-on tape.
* Make sure that the filling is evenly distributed and not lumpy. Pack large areas more loosely than small ones so as not to distort the fabric.
* To pull cording through a stitched channel, use a large tapestry needle or plastic yarn needle. Double the yarn to fill the channel. Don't knot the cord end; instead, leave a 1/2-inch (1.3-cm) tail at each end on the outside of the backing fabric. The tails will remain on the back of the work, providing extra cord length if the piece stretches. Don't cross cords over one another; cut the intersecting cord and start it again on the other side.
* Wool or synthetic knitting yarns, preshrunk cotton cording, piping, twine, candlewick, and other similar materials make fine cording.
* Cording should fill the channel but still be thin enough to pass through it. Thread a blunt needle with the cord and feed it through, beginning at one end or at a corner. When the channel is filled, stretch the fabric gently on the bias, and cut the cord, leaving a long enough tail that the end doesn't disappear into the channel.

MAKING THE TEA COZY

Trim the stuffed front and back to 1/4 inch (6 mm) outside the basted seam line. Using the front as a pattern, cut two lining pieces from the remaining fabric. Cut two small rectangles of fabric 2½ × 1½ inches (6.5 × 4 cm) for the handle. Sew the handle pieces together along the long sides with a 1/4-inch (6-mm) seam. Turn the handle right side out and press. Fold the strip in half widthwise and pin or baste it to the right side of the tea cozy front at right angles to the top seam, matching the raw edges of the handle with the raw edge of the top seam. With right sides facing, stitch the back and front together, leaving the lower edge open. Sew the lining pieces together in the same way, leaving a 2-inch (5-cm) opening at the top. With right sides together, stitch the lining to the tea cozy around the lower edge. Turn the cozy right side out through the opening in the lining. Slip-stitch the opening closed. Turn the lining to the inside and top-stitch the lining and tea cozy together 1/8 inch (3 mm) from the lower edge. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR. *Marilyn Robinson of O'Fallon, Missouri, specializes in wholecloth and appliqué quilts. She teaches and lectures about quilting, and her work has been featured in numerous articles and exhibitions throughout the country.*

A History of Costume in Miniature

Betty Kingsbury's Figurines

RUTH FLANDERS

ON PERMANENT DISPLAY at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon, are more than sixty miniature figurines, each less than 10 inches high, dressed in clothing representing different periods in the history of costume. I first saw them when I attended a performance of *King Richard III.* Their elaborately ornamented costumes rang with such authenticity that I sought to know more about the creator and her work. I learned that Betty Kingsbury, a slight, energetic, eighty-six-year-old artist, had crafted and meticulously costumed the figurines.



Betty Kingsbury, creator of the miniature historical costume collection on display at the Angus Bowmer Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland, Oregon.
Photograph by Ruth Flanders.

"I have been interested in costume and fashion for most of my life, and the project sort of grew," Betty explained, when I interviewed her in her home in Lake Oswego, near Portland. "My first foray into the world of costume was in high school theater. When I looked through my scrapbooks with my grandson the other day, we found newspaper clippings of my high school plays. 'I wasn't in that play,' I told him. 'I did the costumes.'"

Betty's house, which she helped design, is nestled in the side of a steep embankment with a spectacular view of Lake Oswego. Her studio is lined with her watercolors and receives full natural light.

The Costume Project Is Born

Betty Kingsbury was born in Ocean Park, California, and moved several times as she was growing up. While studying art at the University of California at Los Angeles in the 1920s, Betty had been especially stimulated by her class in the history of costume. "I was fascinated by how costumes changed through the years. Around the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, for example, the waistlines began moving up, and they moved until they settled under the bust, a style we know as Empire." Her strong interest in clothing took the practical form of the apparel shop that Betty ran for thirty years, but her historical imagination took the interest in another direction.

For that direction, inspiration came from a tour of Mrs. James Ward Thorne's miniature rooms from the Art Institute of Chicago that were exhibited at the International Exposition in San Francisco in 1939.

> All the furniture was built to a uniform scale, about 1 inch to the foot, and displayed in individual cases. I was particularly taken with the dining room: a banquet table, tiny chairs, wine goblets, and silver less than half an inch long. Outside that exhibit, I saw a collection of dolls dressed in period costumes. The costumes were beautiful, but all the dolls looked exactly the same. Can you imagine an American girl wearing an Egyptian costume? I thought then, 'I can do better than that.' Those two exhibits crystallized my thinking. All my interests—fashion, fabric, costume, sewing, painting, sculpture, and my fascination with miniatures—came together.

The costume project took Betty Kingsbury more than fifteen years to complete.

Although most historical periods covered by the collection are represented by both male and female figures, Betty created all the women first; she simply knew the women's fashions better. "I made them consecutively, beginning with the Egyptian woman (3200 B.C.) followed by the Mycenaean, Ancient Greek and Roman, Northern European, Byzantine, Medieval, Renaissance, Louis XIII through XVI, French Revolution, nineteenth century (and a separate figure for the late nineteenth century when the bustle was in fashion), the Roaring Twenties, and the postwar years up to the mid-twentieth century." A final addendum to the collection came about six years ago when Betty realized that there were

no children represented and added several of them. (She is no longer making the figurines.) While doing research for her project, Betty built a small library of costume references; the two she found most useful were François Boucher's *A History of Costume in the West* and Douglas Gorsline's *What People Wore: A Visual History of Dress from Ancient Times to Twentieth-Century America.*



Costumed figurines, Louis XIV, mid- and late seventeenth century, created by Betty Kingsbury.

Courtesy of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland, Oregon.

Making the Figures

Betty formed the bodies by first shaping a small wire armature and molding papier-mâché over it. She made the heads and hands of plaster of paris. "I put on a blob of plaster the size of a large marble," Betty explained, "and when it dried, I carved it. Dental tools worked perfectly, ones my dentist discarded. Then I painted the figurines with acrylic paint." She used fine camel's hair brushes for the details. "I'd taken life-drawing classes in college, so painting the faces was easy. Carving the hands was the hardest part."

What is striking about the exhibit is the individual character of the figurines. "The nature of the costume suggested a certain stance for each figurine," Betty commented. "During the reign of Louis XVI [1774–1792], for example, an era of voluminous skirts and extremely tight corseting, the upper body was forced forward. The resulting stance is quite stiff and unnatural."

Many of the costumes suggested facial expression to the artist. "The Louis XIV woman, with her high lace headdress (fontange), fur muff, and beauty patches, has an air of gentility, so her face has an 'I'll accept your attention' look." The fontange echoes the men's use of elaborate wigs, as well as the tall chair and settee backs of the period. Beauty patches, which had been worn as early as the time of Ovid in ancient Rome, 43 B.C.–A.D. 17, became fashionable again in seventeenth-century Europe. Made of silk or velvet, they were cut in shapes and placed near eyes and on cheeks and foreheads, often to divert attention from smallpox scars that marred many complexions.

Betty Kingsbury uses crepe hair, which is much finer than real hair, to re-create the nuances of each hair style. During medieval times, for example, hair was worn very long. In the twelfth century, it was plaited with strips of material and encased at the ends in metal cylinders. In the fourteenth century, the braids were coiled, covered with a cylindrical caul (a netted cap often of silver or gold thread), and topped by a padded and jeweled headdress with a veil attached so that no hair showed at all.



Costumed figurines, Renaissance, late sixteenth century, created by Betty Kingsbury.

Courtesy of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland, Oregon.

"Headdresses and hats were constructed mainly from fabric," Betty told me. "They were so small the fabric stood up on its own. A whole hat could be constructed from a remnant 1½ inches square. Before I had my apparel shop, I sewed all my own clothes. I had plenty of remnants." Betty bought new fabric when she needed something she didn't have, however. Whenever she could, Betty sewed the costumes by machine, but because many seams were often only a half-inch long or less, she sewed much by hand.

Attention to detail resonates throughout the collection. The lace, jewels, parasols, swords, mirrors—all the

accessories and trimmings used—are made to scale, collected by the artist along the way. "When you're in the midst of something like this," she said, "you perceive differently. I was always on the lookout for tiny objects that would work." She recycled her worn gloves for leather accessories. From them she fashioned half-inch-long gloves, shoes, and boots, such as the soft bucket-top boots worn by the mid-seventeenth-century cavalier. Lace from an old handkerchief decorated tops of the cavalier's boothose and became the falling band at his neck. Painted and gilded toothpicks became parasols, staffs, swords, knives, and mirror handles. Pleated organdy was used for ruffs. Jewels came from outdated costume jewelry, tiny pearls from the five and ten.

Each figurine mirrors a different period of dress and at the same time becomes part of the historic tapestry that the costume collection creates. Often the style of one period of dress is echoed in others influenced by it. The Byzantine costume, for example, was envied and copied, its Oriental influence visible many places in the world through the seventeenth century; even today, the vestments of the Orthodox church are similar to those worn by Byzantine emperors. The straight tunic of the Byzantine figure shows off the stiff and luminous quality of the silk fabric, replete with jeweled belt and hem and richly trimmed in gold. The purple of the cloak was a color reserved for royalty alone, and the ornate *tablion* (an embroidered and jewel-encrusted piece of fabric often set into an article of clothing to proclaim royal lineage) was typical of the time. The woman's *stephanos,* or crown, is set with precious stones and decorated with long hanging strings of pearls.

After she completed the collection, Betty sent photographs to several people, among them Angus Bowmer, director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland. The timing was right. Captivated by the figurines, he accepted them immediately and had permanent display cases to house them erected in the lobby of the new Angus Bowmer Theater. "We received many offers of displays for the new lobby," Angus told Betty when she introduced herself to him after a performance at the new theater, "but when I saw these figurines, I knew we had something."

I asked Betty how she felt when the project was finally completed. "I guess I figured I had climbed one more hurdle," she answered matter-of-factly. She had made the figures without knowing where they would be placed. About the perfect home they have found in Ashland, she has the same sense of inevitability that she has about the project itself. It was simply meant to be. ❖

COSTUMING THE TUDOR WOMAN

The fairest hand I ever touched! O Beauty,
Till now I never knew thee!
King Henry VIII, Act 1, Scene 4

The crimson velvet gown that clothes the Tudor (early-to mid-sixteenth-century) woman is one Anne Boleyn might have worn the night she first danced with Henry VIII and he whispered, or so William Shakespeare imagined, "The fairest hand I ever touched," while the spurned Queen Katharine mourned in her chambers.

The front bodice of the dress was cut from velveteen in a triangle modified to fit the figurine's bust, glued in place, and the back added. The undersleeve, extending from wrist to elbow and fashioned from fine netting embellished with gold thread, was slipped on next and gathered at the wrist, forming a short cuff. The outer sleeve, with a faced cuff of velveteen brocade, was attached separately to the shoulder and glued under the arm. A broad cuff was folded back to display the undersleeve, and the bodice was finished with gold braid glued around the neckline. Anyone who examines the costumed figurines closely realizes that every seam and edge, whether glued or sewn, is *finished.*

A gored underskirt of the same rich velveteen brocade was glued to the waist, and the velveteen overskirt, cut 4 inches wide, was gathered by hand. Gold trim was added along each side and the skirt tied to the waist with the gathering threads. A white muslin slip under both skirts provided the graceful bouffant silhouette.

The gold chain belt, a thin gold necklace, encircled the waist, its two ends dangling down the front of the skirt, one bearing a tiny gold crucifix and the other a Spanish coin.

The necklace was looped twice around the neck, and the pendant, a small antique earring of tiny turquoise stones and one red stone, was glued in place. Tiny pearls and beads were glued to the fingers for rings.

Betty created a paper pattern for the headpiece by fitting a small square snugly around top and sides of the head, and then she cut the front part of the cap from black ribbon. She layered this section with white ribbon stitched with gold and red and braiding of the same colors and formed to hint at the refined arch noted in Tudor architecture. She used black velveteen for the back of the cap, including a diamond-shaped box from which two streamers fall to the waist.

Even beneath the full skirt, the artist paid precise attention to detail. Black hose seamed up the back of the leg are fastened above the knee with red garters of silk cord. She cut shoes from dark brown leather in a Mary Jane style, and slashed five tiny holes in each to let red nylon show through, just as sleeves of the time were slashed to reveal sumptuous fabrics within. Finally, the shoes were glued in place and soles added.



Costumed Tudor figurine made by Betty Kingsbury.

Courtesy of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland, Oregon. Photograph by Joe Coca.

About the Author.

Ruth Flanders is a writer with a master of fine arts degree from Columbia University. She has published articles on children's literature and storytelling and has completed a novel, a segment of which has been published in the River City Review. *She lives in Seattle, Washington.*

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THE VERY STUFF

STEPHEN BEAL

It began when the needlepoint artist Stephen Beal was stitching a canvas that depicted one in a series of scenes of a battle between a teapot and an ocean liner. The scene included an open door with a stairwell beyond it. He chose DMC cotton embroidery floss #972 for the stairwell, a color he had not used before, and its vibrant gold simply took over the canvas. In response, Beal wrote a poem that became the first of a series of twenty-four odes to his embroidery flosses. Five of the poems—including the first—are reprinted for your enjoyment. The titles are the numbers that identify the depicted shades of cotton floss manufactured by Dollfus-Mieg & Cie (DMC), Paris, France. The poems have been selected from his collection, The Very Stuff. *Two have been slightly adapted for this presentation.*



3607

I HAVE TO ADMIT I'm suspicious of this color.
Wary, even though I've come to use it a lot.
For one thing, if my daughter were going to the prom,
I would not select this fuchsia for her gown.

On the other hand, she might.

I mean, here we are, the kind of folks who button up the house by ten,
having guaranteed
that the dog has been walked
that the cat has come in
that the African violets have been watered
that the basement lights are off.

And all the while we are doing our duty,
tucking in the little ones and saying our prayers,
3607 is out at the roadhouse,
dancing the Monkey with a man named Earl!

What do you do with a color like this?
Lock her up?
Take away her ankle bracelet?
Make her enroll in data-entry?
No, you old stuffed shirt, just let her be,
soaring on her wings of neon
to the lipstick chorus line.



The 350s

THESE SHADES OF CORAL resemble four sisters,
350 the eldest, a big strong girl
who is loving underneath her bossy surface,
concerned for her siblings yet assertive for herself.
She will have three lovers early,
then settle down and raise a lot of kids.

351 and 352 are the sisters who get called each other's names,
wear each other's clothes, trade boyfriends,
travel with the same pack of girls.
One is darker, one is lighter;
together they are sunrise, the glory of the day.
And here, again, is 353, the shade of peachy-pink in the dawn,
a girl so beautiful that no one takes her seriously,
a girl so tender that everybody walks her home,
a girl who blossoms at nineteen,
puts her hair up,
and grinds men's hearts into dust.

Men will dream so often of having loved her,
they will end up believing that they did,
will speak to their friends of that night in Provence,
when her car broke down and she sought refuge at an inn
where the two of them shared a carafe of rosé wine
before they went upstairs,
he carrying her bag,
she carrying her little dog Pepé.



972

LAST NIGHT I STITCHED a corner of a room
with a deep apricot taupe,
and with a shade that is brighter and peachier,
and now, tonight, for a stairwell bordering this juicy room,
I put in 972.

Do you know 972?

This chrome is a yellow you could walk to China on,
a bounty for which you could stamp your foot right through the floor
when the princess, who's been spinning strands of 972, inquires,
"You like this color, Rumpelstiltskin?"

I like this color, Princess.
For this majestic gold I will keep my temper.
Stay here. Say you win.
Be your servant, be your slave,
just to keep in touch with all this egg-yolk yellow,
just to keep my hands on
all this glory stuff.



369

FROM A DISTANCE, along a road in northern Pennsylvania,
this green stands out as the first green of willows,
exuberant against the rain-soaked trunks of maples
stretching bright red buds against a pale blue sky.

Over there, three bushes of forsythia are rushing down a hill
to join some black and white cows in a meadow,
where the green is so green it sends your eyes
back up the hill to the pale green willows,
swishing and swaying in the dance of spring.



902

IN HIS CHAMBERS in his town house in Edo
the warrior Watanabe Saburo is concluding his career.
He has fought in the summer and winter battles at Osaka.
He has served his emperor well.
Now it is time to take the long road to the hills
where he will spend his days in contemplation,
tending a garden and keeping some pigs.

In his chambers Saburo is supervising the packing of his gowns
for donation to the Nakamura Theater,
where generations of actors will strut his pomp through scenes
he has not known,
and can not dream of,
being so far removed from pomp in the hills,
with his millet and his onions and his pigs.

The last gown his servants pack is one of brown mulberry,
embroidered across the right shoulder with a branch of flowering plum
and along the hem with melting snow.

Saburo wore this gown for the funeral of the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi.
As he took his place in the procession, the smile of a courtesan
caught his eye.
He did not know her name, or her house;
he did not see her again.

Now, as a servant folds the snowy hem across the flowers,
Saburo recalls her smile as she raised her fan.

It is all concluded, and it is all beginning,
this great warrior's great quest for joy.

About the Author. *Stephen Beal, educated at Williams College and at Oxford University, usually stitches on eighteen-mesh canvas. Each of his needlepoint canvases takes an average of eight months to complete. In many of them, he uses a six-ply technique that permits fine gradations of color and intricate detail. His work has been shown in national and international shows. Three canvases were included in the DMC international exhibition that traveled in Japan in 1994.* The Very Stuff, *the collection from which these poems were selected, is presently available on separate sheets for $10, which includes shipping and handling, from Stephen Beal, 617 Oakton Ave., Evanston, IL 60202-2903, (708) 328-2229.*



By the 1540s, patterns for double running stitch reflected both angular Islamic designs and curvilinear Renaissance ornament. Embroidered strips on the smock in this portrait are more intricate in design than the Islamic models on which they were based. *Portrait of a Lady in White*, by Moretto da Brescia, circa 1540.

Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection, Washington, D.C.

Concernynge the Excellency of the Nedle Worcke Spanisshe Stitche

BY KATHLEEN EPSTEIN

And for this kingdomes good are hither come,

From the remotest parts of Christendome,

Collected with much paines and industry,

From scorching Spaine and freezing Muscovie,

From fertill France, and pleasant Italy,

From Poland, Sweden, Denmarcke, Germany,

And some of these rare Patternes have been set,

Beyond the bounds of faithlesse Mahomet:

From spacious China, and those Kingdomes East,

And from great Mexico, the Indies West.

Thus are these works, farre fetcht and dearely bought,

and consequently good for Ladies thought. . . .

the Spanish-stitch, Rosemary-stitch, and Mowse-stitch,

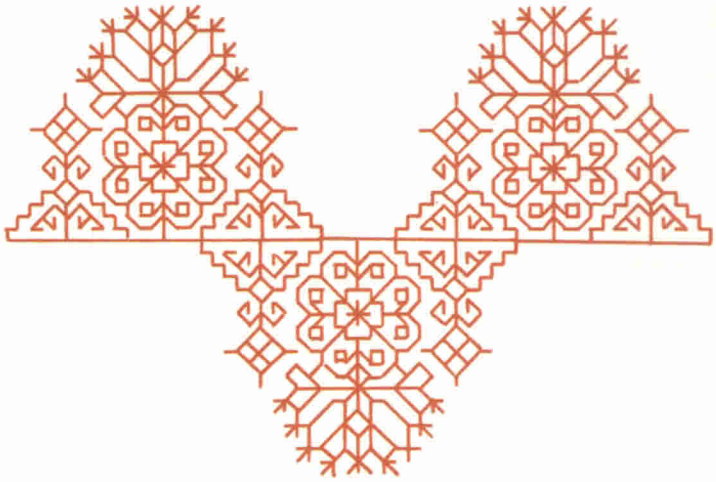
The smarting Whip-stitch, Back-stitch, & the Crosse-stitch,

All these are good and these we must allow,

And these are everywhere in practise now.

John Taylor, "The Praise of the Needle,"
from *The Needles Excellency,* London, 1631

LINE STITCH, square stitch, Holbein stitch, double running stitch—all are modern names for an embroidery stitch in which the worker counts the threads of the ground fabric to create precise, reversible outline patterns. Seventeenth-century English schoolmistresses taught the technique as Spanish stitch, an appellation that first appeared in print in a German pattern book of 1527. A seamstress employed at the court of England's Elizabeth I called it true stitch. Sixteenth-century Italian publishers dubbed it *punto scritto,* or writing stitch. Why so many names? The answer to that question begins 700 years in the past, in Islamic Egypt.



Drawing of a sixteenth-century European double running pattern similar to that embellishing the smock in da Brescia's portrait.

Roots in the Islamic World

The earliest known examples of double running stitch embroideries are found on linen fragments and partial garments from archaeological excavations in Egypt. Precise dating of these pieces is uncertain, but they are believed to have been produced between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, placing their manufacture during the rule of the Mamluks (1250–1517). The double running embroideries comprise reversible bands of geometric, floral, and animal patterns and Arabic script, all worked in silk thread. Horizontal and vertical stitches dominate, giving them a distinctive, boxy appearance.



Garment fragment with double running and pulled-thread patterns. Some Mamluk-period embroidery features double running stitch tracery and heavier counted-thread stitches. Egypt, thirteenth–fifteenth century.
Courtesy of The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C.

These textiles represent a variety of articles of dress, worn by men and women of all ages, economic classes, and faiths—Muslim, Jew, and Christian. On any given day in fourteenth-century Cairo, one would have seen borders of red, blue, green, and yellow embroidery decorating the bodices of shirts and robes, the hems of sleeves, and the edges of turbans, scarves, kerchiefs, sashes, and shawls.

These embroideries are most likely the work of female rather than male hands. Although men engaged in embroidery as a profession, it was also the most common occupation for Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women. From adolescence onward, women could participate in the economic life of the family by embroidering at home for others or for sale in the bazaar. Women teachers are frequently referred to in letters, business ledgers, and business and court documents. They taught little girls embroidery and other domestic skills, but whether the teaching was done in schools is not known. The products of this female industry were sold by female brokers to the bazaar merchants. The textiles could be purchased already embroidered, or one could order personalized pieces for special occasions such as weddings and religious holidays.

Illuminated manuscripts, legal and business correspondence, and contemporary Arabic and Jewish accounts from the Mamluk period attest to an extreme concern with clothing and outward appearance. The display of riches was seen as an expression of gratitude to God, who had provided them. Presents given were in many cases garments embroidered with blessings.

Unfortunately, it is not known what the double running stitch was called by its Mamluk-period workers, how far into the past it was practiced in Egypt, nor where it originated. However, it is known that double running embroidery was worked elsewhere in the Islamic world. The patterns and embroidered inscriptions created in this stitch were part of a larger language of design shared by the Islamic countries of the northern and eastern Mediterranean and Spain. Similar patterns can be seen in contemporary textiles such as the cartouches (oval or oblong figures) of carpets made in Cairo, intricate small-pattern Holbein carpets made in central Anatolia (now Turkey), sumptuous woven silks and richly patterned carpets of Spain, and textiles from North Africa. Which inspired the Mamluk embroidery designs and which were modeled on them remains a matter for speculation.

Paths to Renaissance Europe

As early as the fourteenth century, European paintings, palace and church inventories, and commercial and private correspondence indicate that firmly established trade networks dispersed Islamic textiles, both cloth and carpets, far beyond the Islamic world into Europe. So popular and prestigious were these textiles that by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, European artists and craftsmen imitated their designs and sometimes their techniques for the pleasure of royalty, the church, and affluent citizens.

Sometime during the last quarter of the fifteenth century, the double running stitch and its accompanying Arabic patterns entered the repertoire of European needleworkers in one of several possible ways: The long-standing Muslim settlements in Spain, which had a tradition of textile work, traded with both Cairo and Christian Europe. Venice also had extensive trade connections in the Mediterranean. Finally, Egypt, and especially Cairo, was host to many European visitors engaged in political and economic activities, who could have purchased these embroideries in the Cairo markets.

Whatever the means of transmission, by the end of the fifteenth century, portraits of the period show well-to-do Spaniards, Italians, and Germans of both sexes sporting clothing embellished with Arabic-style double running patterns. By the 1520s, embroidered geometric designs of Arabic origin—including Arabic inscriptions—and double running patterns influenced by the curvilinear designs of the Italian Renaissance appeared on clothing.

Perhaps the best known of the painters who accurately rendered these embroideries is Hans Holbein the

Younger (1497–1543), court painter to England's Henry VIII. Because double running bands are found so frequently on his subjects' collars, cuffs, ruffs, and seams, both the patterns and the stitch were labeled Holbein in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

The introduction of pattern books, bound collections of designs for embroidery and other textile arts, gave double running patterns a wider audience in Europe and England. Johannes Schönsperger, a printer from Augsburg, Germany, was the first to publish double running patterns in the Arabic style, in 1523. A contemporary of Schönsperger's, the Cologne printer Peter Quentel, pirated these patterns in 1527. He was the first to refer to them in print as "Span[i]che stiche."

In 1529, Giovanni Andrea Vavassore printed an Italian pattern book that featured ornament patterns for double running stitch. The motifs were clearly of the Italian Renaissance (including floral, bird, and classical designs), but these normally curvilinear designs were rendered in the boxy Arabic style. Vavassore referred to these patterns as *punto scritto,* perhaps because the double running stitch had been used to embroider Arabic inscriptions as well as decorative patterns. Vavassore proclaimed that his embroidery designs could be used on a variety of domestic textiles, including

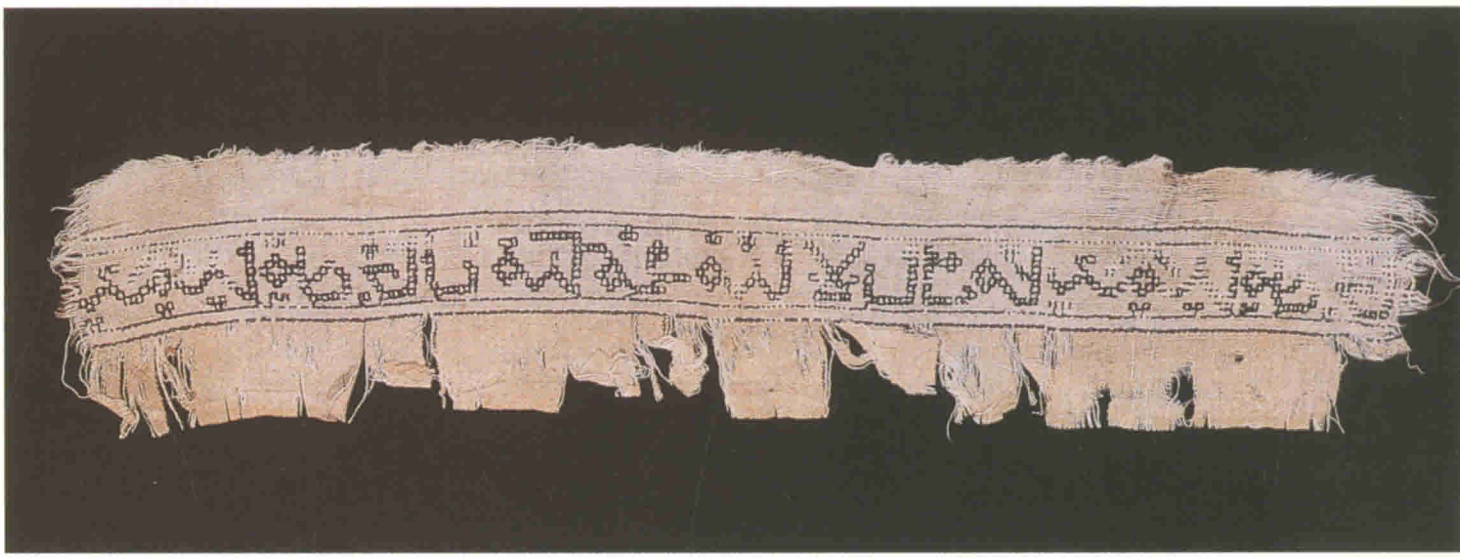
> collars for gentlemen or ladies, insertions in the front of ladies' bodices, borders for bed coverlets, pillow covers, borders for surplices, coifs, or any other work that might take your fancy or desire.

The first double running patterns printed in Europe were plagiarized by later German and Italian printers. By 1550, Germans and Italians were borrowing each other's patterns as well as adding their own to the collection of modified angular Arabic bands, curvilinear Renaissance ornaments, and innovative hybrids of the two styles.

England's Band Samplers

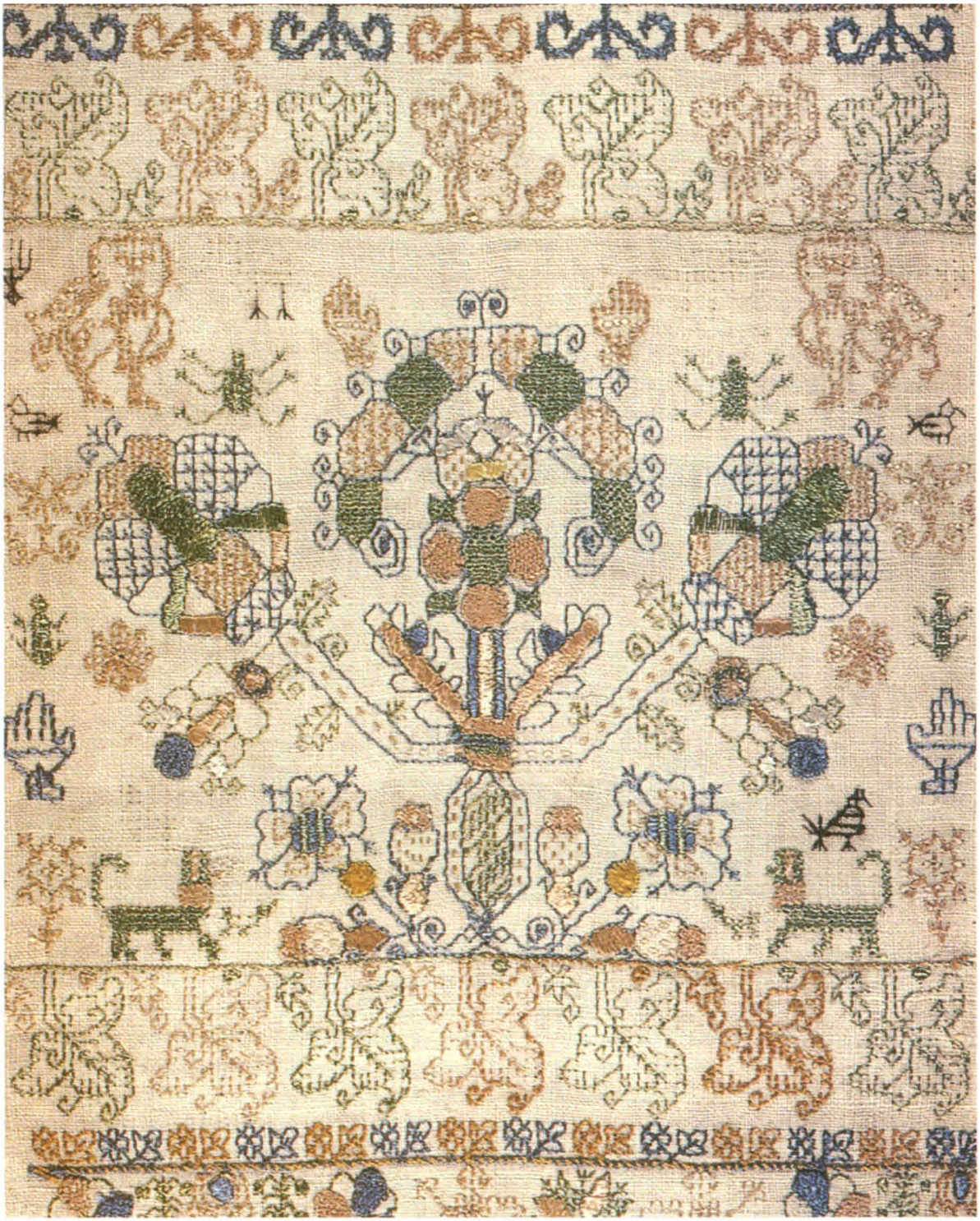
Both Arabic textiles and German and Italian pattern books found their way to England before 1550. During the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603), the influence of the Renaissance reached England, and the English became enamored of anything Italian, including embroidery and textile patterns. Perhaps the force that fanned the flame of interest in the double running stitch more than any other was the influx, starting in the 1560s and continuing into the early seventeenth century, of foreign refugees fleeing religious persecution in France, the Netherlands, Spain, and Italy. Some of the refugees established schools for girls as well as boys, offering lessons in music, foreign languages, and various sorts of handicrafts, including needlework.

By 1600, the English had adopted the German name, Spanish stitch, for the double running stitch. It was also called true (or trew) stitch because the resulting patterns were the same on both sides of the fabric. Spanish stitch is among the techniques listed in John Taylor's early-seventeenth-century poem "The Praise of the Needle," printed in the English pattern book *The Needles Excellency* and quoted from at the beginning of this article. In *The Academy of Armoury,* written after 1649 and published in 1688, Randalle Holme listed "Spanish stitch, true on both sides" as an important sewing term for a schoolmistress to know. As a clothing embellishment, double running stitch had fallen out of fashion in England by



Garment fragment with rectilinear Arabic inscription worked in double running stitch. This angular calligraphic style was known as *kufic.* The phrases that can be deciphered are usually conventional expressions consisting of blessings and proverbs. Translation: He who puts up boundaries between us achieves nothing. (Translation by Dr. Aman Attieh, University of Texas at Austin.) Egypt, thirteenth–fifteenth century.

Courtesy of The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C.

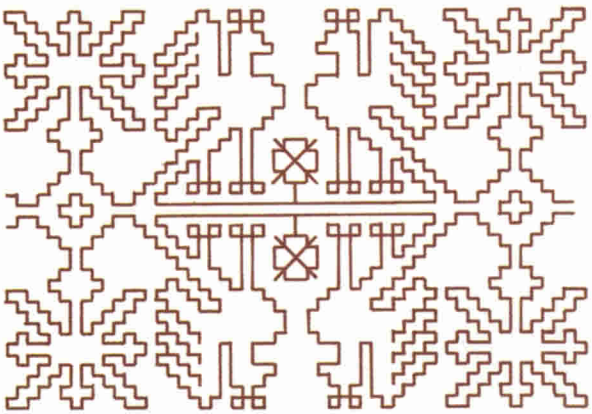


Double running patterns in an English sampler made by Mary Swift in 1666.
From the author's collection.

the 1620s. However, English schoolgirls practiced the stitch and its patterns until the early years of the eighteenth century.

In England, the daughters of landed gentry, merchants, ministers, and self-sufficient craftsmen usually received formal training in domestic skills and social amenities. A girl might be boarded with another family and learn her skills within that family or attend a boarding or day school. In the greater London area alone, there were about two dozen such schools. Rather than promoting intellectual pursuits, most curricula emphasized the acquisition of household management skills, religious instruction, diversions, such as dancing and painting, and handicrafts, including embroidery. Needlework featured prominently in this education, and the quintessential needlework form that the students worked was the sampler, most often a band sampler.

Seventeenth-century English band samplers are characterized by their orderly rows, or bands, of patterns worked one below the other down a narrow length of linen, the short ends of which are parallel to the selvedges. By the early part of the century, the double running patterns worked on these samplers had evolved into a fusion of the geometric shapes and angular lines found in the German interpretations of Islamic designs and the more fluid floral and animal motifs of Renaissance ornament.



Drawing of a double running pattern taken from Giovanni Vavassore's *Corona di racammi*, 1530. The stepped lines echo the style of Mamluk-period embroideries, but the subject matter of the pattern is Renaissance.

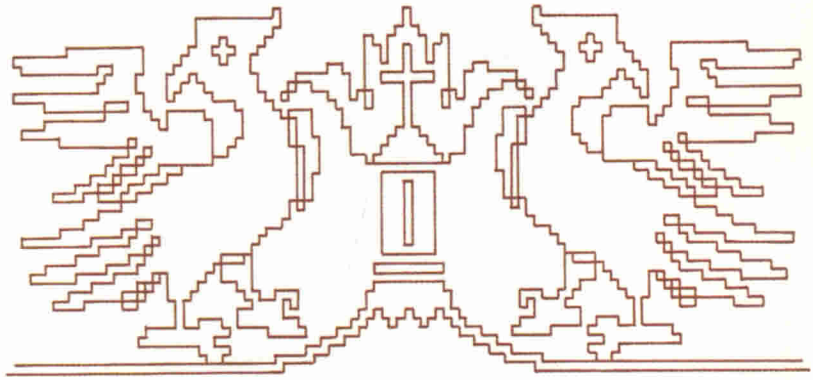
Other patterns are purely English inventions. Sampler making was a remarkably conservative activity with a high degree of conformity in materials, shape, structure, and patterns. Many of the patterns were copied from one sampler to another throughout the century.

Rather than being a record of designs intended for future use, a seventeenth-century English band sampler composed of double running patterns was a demonstration of skill mastery that represented other domestic skills as well: it was a "diploma" indicating that a young woman would be able to manage her future role as mistress of a household.

The Spanish stitch designs on English band samplers reflect a synthesis of patterns from three diverse cultures: the Islamic world, Renaissance Europe, and Tudor England. In its travels from Mamluk-period Egypt to Europe, the stitch was taken in, often renamed, mastered, and its designs reworked, creating a new embroidery aesthetic. English bands of Spanish stitch are material statements that reflect four centuries of continuity and change.

The title of this article has been excerpted from the German printer Willem Vorsterman's pattern book of 1527. The title page of his English edition, published in the same year, begins, *A neawe treatys: as concernynge the excellency of the nedle worcke spanisshe stitche and weavynge in the frame. very necessary to al theym whiche desyre the perfect knowledge of seamstry quiltinge and brodyworke. . . .*

About the Author. *Kathleen Epstein holds a master's degree in anthropology from the University of Texas. She is the author of* An Anonymous Woman Her Work Wrought in the 17th Century *(1992) and* A New Modelbook for Spanish Stitch *(1993), published by Curious Works Press, 107 RR 620 South, #11E, Austin, TX 78734. In 1994, she curated an exhibit on the history of double running stitch called "A Stitch through Time" at The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., and is currently working and doing research at the Museum.*



Drawing of a double running pattern taken from Johannes Schönsperger's *Ein new getruckt Model Büchli*, 1529. German presses probably had published single sheets of patterns for embroiderers by the late fifteenth century. These early printed designs have much in common stylistically with their embroidered Islamic precursors.

Further Reading

The most complete accounts in English of the Mamluk period are by Esin Atil, S. D. Goitein, and Ibn Khaldûn.

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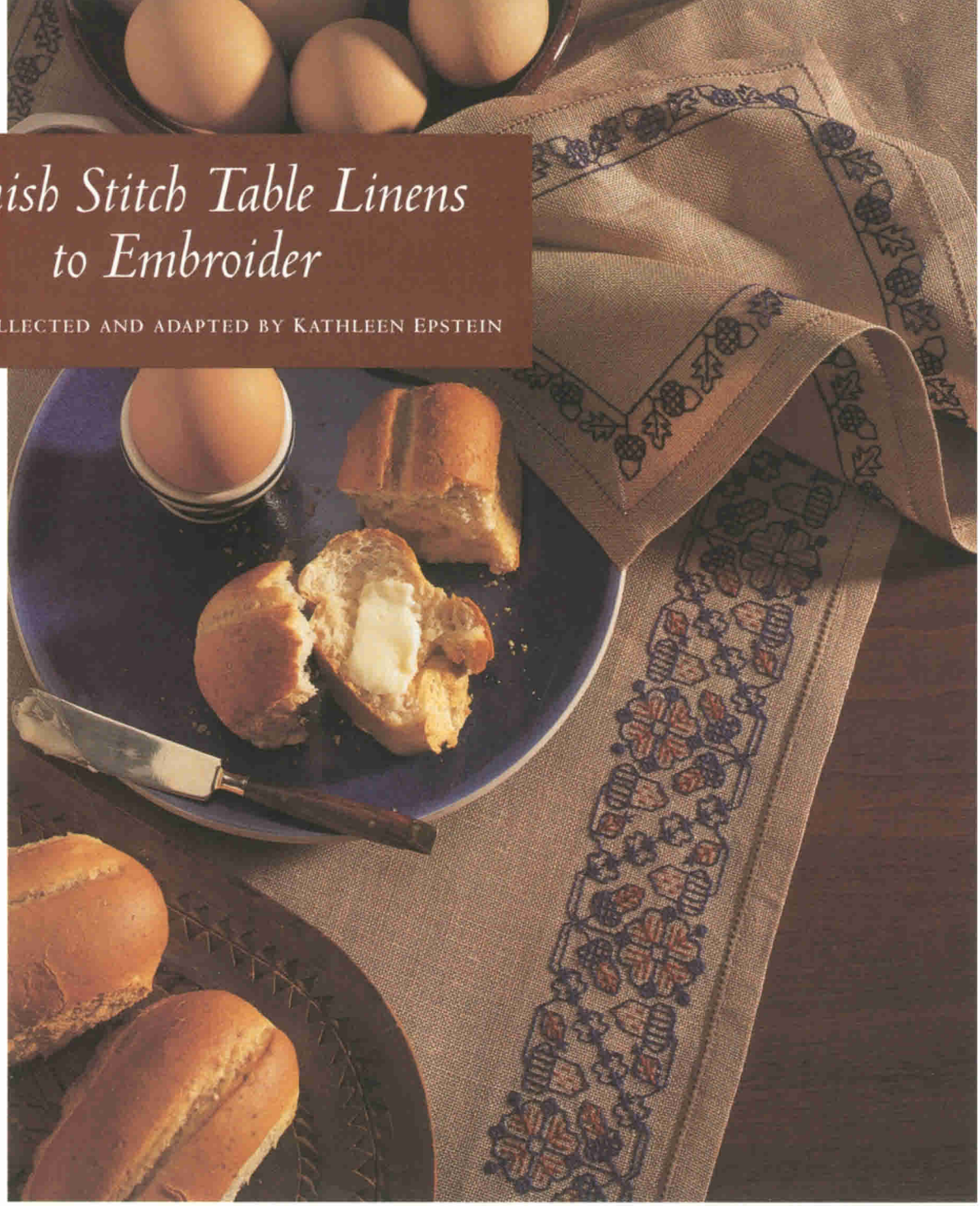
Langdon, Helen. *Holbein.* London: Phaidon Press, 1993.

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Spanish Stitch Table Linens to Embroider

DESIGNS COLLECTED AND ADAPTED BY KATHLEEN EPSTEIN



Bands of Spanish stitch adorn a linen placemat and matching napkin.

Plate, egg cup, jam jar, and knife courtesy of The Cupboard, Fort Collins, Colorado.

THESE STRAIGHT BANDS of Spanish stitch patterns, collected from seventeenth-century English samplers, lend themselves to the rectangular shapes of table and other household linens. Use them on runners, tablecloths, placemats, or napkins. Our placemat and napkin are stitched with flower thread on even-weave linen fabric. While the instructions will guide you through any Spanish stitch pattern, you'll need to know a plain hem stitch as well. If you haven't tried Spanish stitch before, working one of the narrow borders will be an excellent introduction to the technique.

Materials

32-count, even-weave linen, one piece 21½ × 15 inches (54.5 × 38 cm) for each placemat and one piece 18 × 18 inches (46 × 46 cm) for each napkin. We've used Wichelt Linen in amber.

DMC Flower thread, dark blue #2337, rust #2918, and beige #2841 or a color to match your fabric

Tapestry needle, size 24

Light-colored sewing thread for overcasting and basting

Sewing thread to match the linen fabric

Pattern Sizes

Worked on 32-count fabric over three threads, patterns 1 and 2 measure 5/8 inch (1.4 cm) wide, pattern 3 measures 1¾ inches (4.5 cm) wide, and pattern 4 measures 2¼ inches (5.7 cm) wide.

Working Spanish Stitch

Spanish stitch is made up of a double row of running stitch worked over a consistent number of threads of even-weave fabric. The pattern is worked in two stages. In the first, the running stitch follows the outline of the pattern, leaving gaps on the front corresponding to where the thread is on the back of the fabric. In the second stage, the running stitch returns along the same route, filling in the gaps so that the pattern is identical on both sides of the fabric. A main route carries you through the overall pattern, but many side routes and subside routes must be completed as you progress along the main route. When embarking on a new pattern, take time to plan the main route and side trips before you begin stitching. When worked correctly, the two sides of the embroidery will be identical.

For the leaf-and-acorn band shown in figures 1 to 4, the main route runs from one end of the band to the other end and returns again to the beginning. Each leaf and acorn is a side trip made on the outward journey. The pattern may be worked in either direction. At the first leaf, make a running stitch outline of the leaf stem, the leaf, and finally the central rib (Figure 1). At the end of the rib, retrace your steps, filling in the outline. Stitch the outline of the acorn stem and as you work around the right side of the acorn cup, make further side trips to stitch the individual lines of cross-hatching and the line between the acorn and cup (Figure 2). Continue around the acorn, and on the left side of the cup, complete the cross-hatching. By the time you reach the acorn stem, you should have completed all the internal detail of the acorn and cup (Figure 3). Retrace your steps around the outline back to the main route (Figure 4). At the end of the entire band, stitch back along the main route to complete the pattern.

If both sides of the stitched fabric will be visible when it's in use, begin or finish a thread by weaving it under and over about six single threads of the fabric along the intended stitching path where it will eventually be hidden. If the reverse of the fabric will not be seen, you may begin and finish threads by whip-stitching them over about 3/4 inch of stitching on the back of the pattern. Leave a 3-inch (8-cm) tail as you begin the first thread and whip-stitch it over the stitching later.

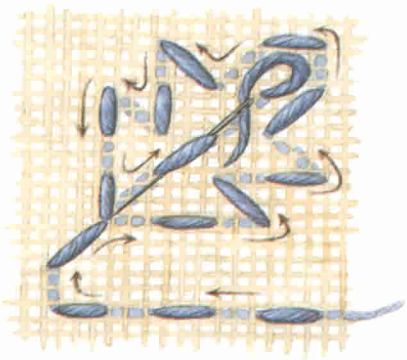


Figure 1

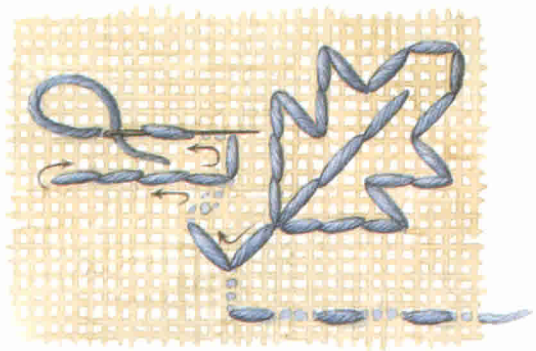


Figure 2

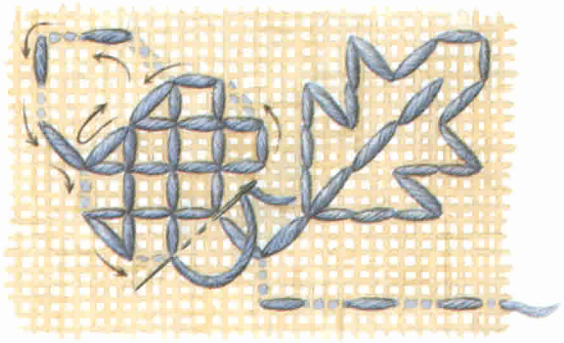


Figure 3

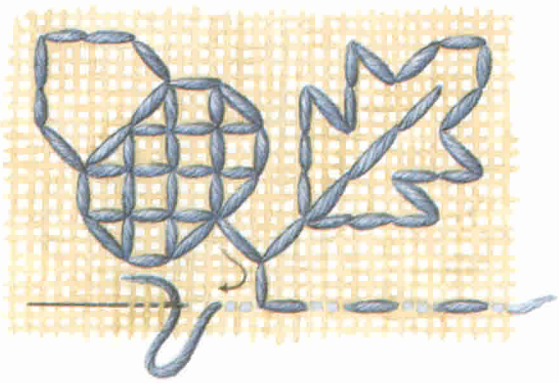
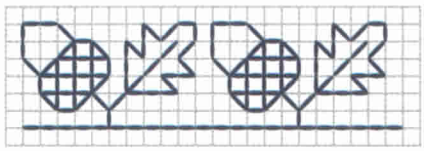
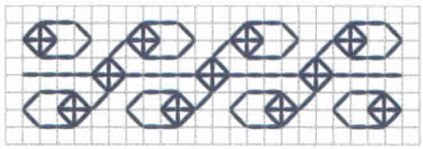


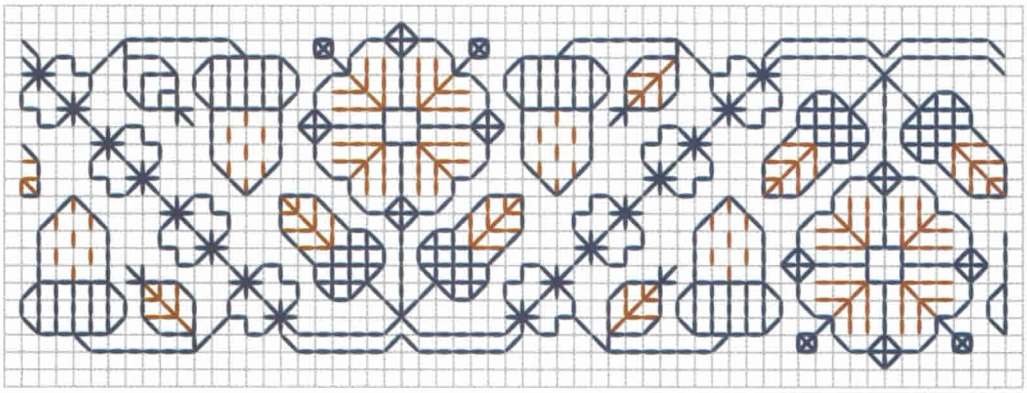
Figure 4



1



2



3

Spanish stitch patterns from English band samplers.

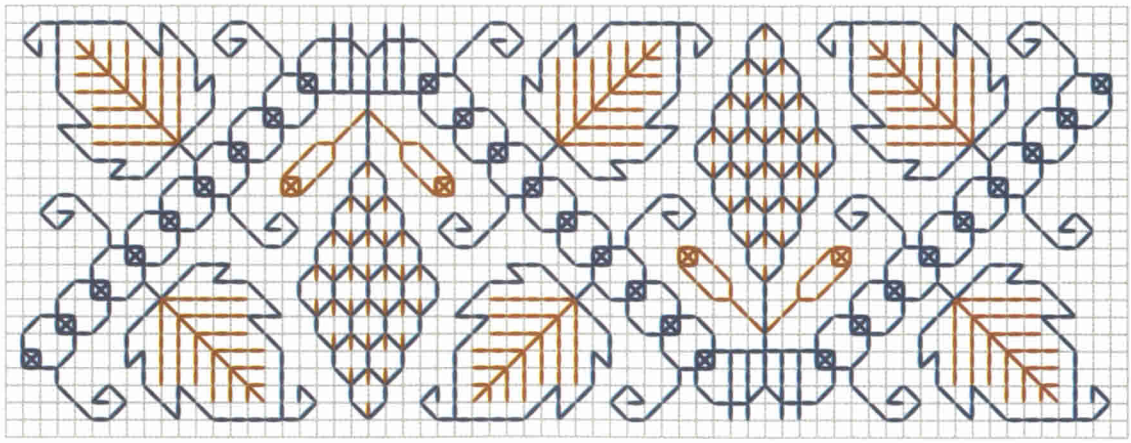
Placemat and Napkin

Overcast the raw edges of the fabric. Fold the placemat in half widthwise and mark the fold with a row of basting. Using one strand of flower thread and working over three fabric threads, begin stitching the pattern band on the "main route" at the center of a pattern repeat. Position the center of the pattern on the line of basting and leave 1¾ inches (4.5 cm) of fabric between the pattern band and the raw edge of the fabric. Work the pattern from the center to each side as far as you wish or until the pattern is 1¾ inches (4.5 cm) from the sides of the fabric. The two-color bands will not be completely reversible because the areas of contrasting color are not continuous.

Work a narrow pattern band at the lower edge of the mat, leaving 1¾ inches (4.5 cm) between the lower edge of the band and the raw edge of the fabric. Work to each side to match the top band. Stitch a narrow pattern band around all four sides of the napkin, leaving at least 1¾ inches (4.5 cm) between the band and the edges of the fabric.

Finishing

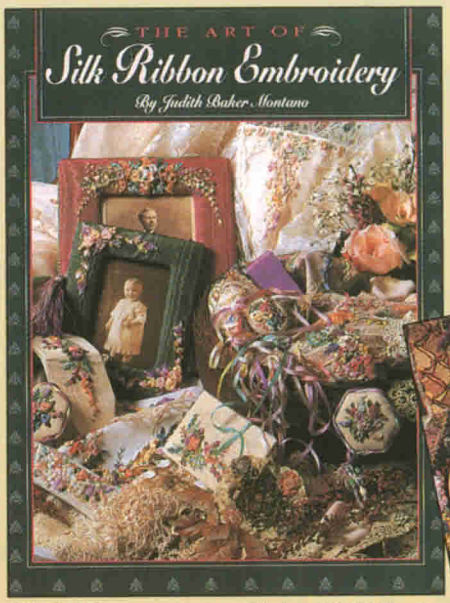
If any margin is odd-sized to accommodate the pattern, trim the edges of the fabric to match the narrowest margin or to 1¾ inches (4.5 cm). Remove the overcasting. Fold the raw edges to the wrong side twice to form a 1/2-inch (1.3-cm) hem. Miter the corners and slip-stitch the join with matching thread. Pin the hem, then stitch it in place with matching flower thread and a plain hem stitch worked over three fabric threads. Wash the finished placemats and napkins in lukewarm water. Hang to dry and press thoroughly while still damp. ❖



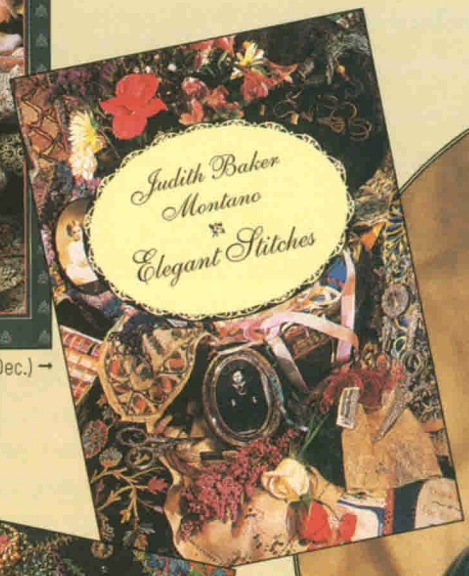
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THE ART OF

Judith Baker Montano



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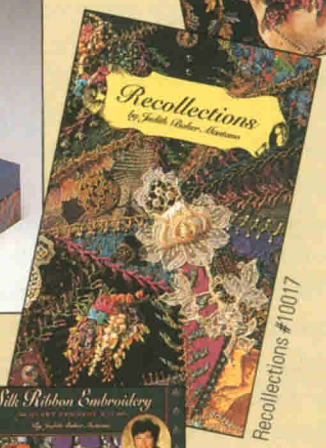


Stitches #10106 (Dec.) →





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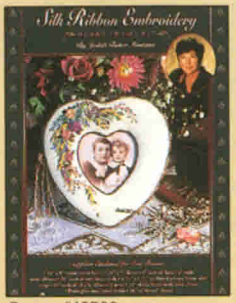
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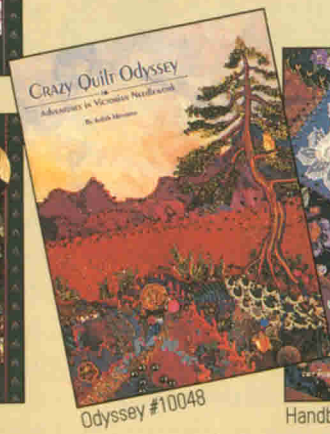
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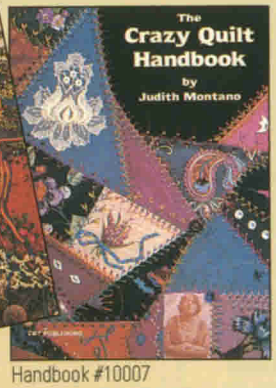
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Book Marks

Books in review

Cloth and Human Experience

Edited by Annette B. Weiner
and Jane Schneider

Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989. Softbound, 431 pages, $19.95. ISBN 0-87474-986-7.

Cloth as a metaphor for society, thread for social relations, express more than connectedness, however. The softness and ultimate fragility of these materials capture the vulnerability of humans, whose every relationship is transient, subject to the degenerative processes of illness, death, and decay.

From the introduction, by Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider

Though comprising just twelve essays, *Cloth and Human Experience* does a creditable job of living up to its sweeping title. The spirit of the collection is that of ethnographic inquiry, and the social and political significance of cloth in both industrial and nonindustrial societies is addressed with engaging detail and breadth. The studies focus on the role of cloth in many countries, including Africa, India, Madagascar, Japan, and Peru, while examining its origins and history.

The real charm of the book, however, is conveyed by its chapter titles and subtitles: "Dressing for the Next Life" with its subsection "Why the Dead Wear Decorated Raffia Textiles" and "Why Do Ladies Sing the Blues? Indigo Dyeing, Cloth Production, and Gender Symbolism in Kopi" with its subsection "The Dangers of Blueness." It's a curious and readable compendium of culture, critical theory, art history, religion, and economic analysis, with cloth as the focus. And while there is a good deal of specialized information, the book's selections go beyond the strict interests of scholars and practitioners, appealing to anyone at least as interested in "human experience" as in "cloth."

However one enters the book, one leaves it overwhelmed by the multidimensional uses of cloth both materially and symbolically through time and from culture to culture, and by the seemingly inexhaustible potential for reinvention and subversion inherent in cloth and its production. Thanks to feminist inquiry, the notion that cloth working has long been an arena of empowerment is not new, but as the book indirectly illustrates, cloth has been a means towards power, status, and community for women in unexpected and consistently phoenixlike ways. Even when its production has been appropriated by capitalist or patriarchal superstructures, its subversive element unfailingly provides a means toward resistance.

In short, cloth is historically one of the great art forms. An inquiry into the history of cloth is also an inquiry into a struggle. Indeed, as many passages point out, its craftwork has even been linked with witchcraft. Although this point is minor in the scope of the book, it suggests what the book makes clear in many ways: the essence of our nearest companion, cloth, is fantastical.

Cloth is also shown to promote homogenization just as handily as diversity (as in uniforms), just as easily mask as reveal. Further, in the chapter by Jane Schneider with the intriguingly overwrought title "Rumpelstiltskin's Bargain: Folklore and the Merchant Capitalist Intensification of Linen Manufacture in Early Modern Europe," the relationship of women to cloth becomes one of a devil's bargain, its production a matter of desperate choice, and its reward Mephistophelian: achieved at too dear a price.

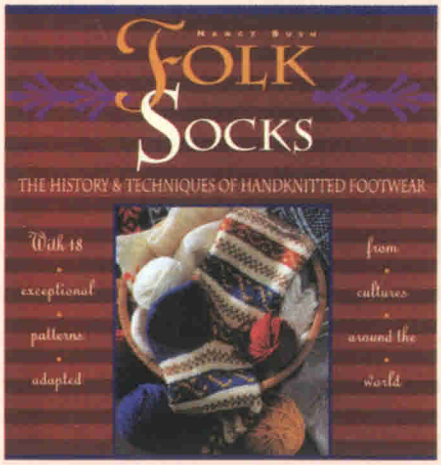
> According to the folklorist Ruth Bottigheimer, many of the European folktales collected in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries portray spinning as "highly undesirable despite the surface message that it will lead to riches (1982:142,150). . . . above all it is the archetypical employment of domesticated, poverty-stricken womanhood" (Bottigheimer 150; also Ferguson 1979:83).

Although no one quotation could represent the collection's spectrum of concerns, the excerpt above suggests some of them. In these pages, many different aspects of human experience—for example, fairy tales, the rites of the Kuba of Zaire, issues of power and authority, the social meaning of costumes—are revealed and explored. Because it treats cloth as both material and symbolic and because its authors come from many disciplines, the book escapes easy categorizing, and thus diminishment. Scholars, craftspersons, and general readers will find it appealing for its specific details and for the charm of its unusual examinations of a pervasive human art.

—*Evan Oakley*

Although Cloth and Human Experience *was published in 1989, it is a book well worth visiting or revisiting for readers interested in cloth and culture.*

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WORDSPINNING

Allan Gurganus

As she lives out her last years in a nursing home, Lucy Marsden, the widow of the last surviving Confederate soldier, tells her story to a young woman recording it as oral history. It is her husband's story, that of a boy who went to war at thirteen and never recovered from seeing his best friend killed and then killing a boy close to his own age, but it is also Lucy's story, that of the much younger wife (when they marry, she is fifteen and he fifty) of the man whose life has been shaped by that war. In the following passage, which occurs late in the telling, she describes a quilt pieced of fabrics from the events of her life. Born decades after the war ended, she fights the *Civil War in the form of her husband—and the civil wars of life itself. Although it would take pages to explain the events and characters behind each piece of cloth that Lucy mentions, it is not hard to imagine the difficult, vivid experiences that inform this "counterpain."*

FROM

Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All

YESTERDAY, on a home outing, Taw and me rode the blue Chevy bus. Among others we sat, not hand in hand but at least pressed wheel-to-wheelchair. Bus stopped alongside a shiny hearse. In back, one tapered mahogany box. Taw looked down at it. He snorted for all to hear, "That's what *I* need. A nice, dry, lined coffin." Many laughed. At our age, the laugh of recognizing. We'd all thought that.

"Still, turns out I am something he never was. You know what? Well, see, there's the war and it gets holt of him, it shakes him something awful, and then he gets to grab me by the scruff of my neck. . . . So, say, he's the last vet of that war, but me? Why, honey, I'm a veteran of the veteran."

—Lucy Marsden, oldest living confederate widow

Still, it got me down a bit. I went back to quilt planning. It's comforting, nights specially. I know what fabrics I would choose but guess Jerome [an orderly at the nursing home] can't find them. Still, just telling makes them so.

Requested cloths so far?: a nosegay of dotted Swiss from Shirley's pinafore so yellow it'd cause a citrus-grower to pucker. One pair of long johns, cashmere—red/white/blue, knitted by a mother for her iceberg-bound soldier boy. A white snippet from Lady More Marsden's stay-at-home silk wrapper charred the faintest ivory. Maybe one of Little Xerxes' tuxedo tails—white satin fine as Lady's silk or better, and as a tribute to her. Baby's plaid organdy hairbow. The piping off one aunt-stitched honeymoon travel-outfit, seriously stained. One pink cotton blanket I wrapped naked Archie in and ran for help. A stiff plug from Maimie Beech's starched uniform that broke like cardboard when she sat first time each day. Poppa's blue serge postal outfit, worn but rarely. My granddad Angus McCloud's hunting-plaid kilt. My own momma's narrow batiste slip, hacked by garden shears whilst chopping off curls and wasps. One small square of gauze from my Ned's eyes that day on the Men's Ward. A swatch dyed with Momma's people get-rich indigo. Maybe dingy lovely Belgian lace from a sad lady in transit on club cars. Gray worsted off the tunic of a child soldier that so unhappily outgrew it. Jerome's best gold-lamé disco "top." And surely samples from a home-bred, home-fed, home-killed, hand-tanned real mink coat. Plus green velveteen off a costume shared by Bible Judith and my regretted Louisa. And stuff it with the down from Reba's holy red birds.—That'll do for *one* side, child.

What a counterpain to sleep under or die in. We all got to represent each other. Every color is a deed and suffering, a prize. Our quilt'll be, oh, quite the winding cloth and glad rag.

—Pull it over me!

From the novel Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All. *Copyright 1989 by Allan Gurganus. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.*

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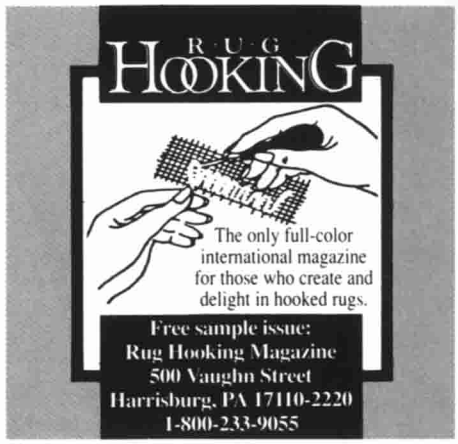
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A Stitch

Linda Ligon

Idiot Work

Cast three or four stitches onto a double-pointed knitting needle. Knit across, slide the stitches to the right end of the needle they're now on, and repeat. And repeat. And repeat. Repeat until you fall off your chair. Repeat until you have a knitted cord long enough to tether a pair of mittens, amuse a small child or kitten, or stretch from your workbasket out to the mailbox and back. In older, less politically correct knitting literature, this is called idiot cord (tactfully shortened to I-cord by Elizabeth Zimmermann of *Knitting without Tears* fame).

In my own experience, there's a strong correlation between idiot work and unfinished work, and "idiot" has less to do with the intelligence required to perform the task than the intelligence and forethought, or lack thereof, that might have prompted me to start it in the first place.

Here's another one: Using an afghan crochet hook, make a very long chain. Insert the hook under the top strand of the second loop from the hook, yarn over and pull through, leaving two loops on the hook. Do the same thing in the next loop, and in each loop across the chain, keeping all the new loops on the shaft of the hook. Now yarn over and pull through the loop nearest the hook, casting it off. Yarn over again, and pull it through the next two stitches. Continue until all the loops but one have been cast off. These two passes constitute one row, and give one the odd and misleading sensation of undoing one's work Penelopewise. You might know this as Tunisian crochet; in Caulfeild's *Encyclopedia of Victorian Needlework*, it's called idiot stitch. Like idiot cord, it's characterized by repetition: Hook, hook, hook, till you're at the end of your rope, so to speak, and then cast off, cast off, et cetera. To make an afghan in this technique, which is what it's most often used for anymore, is a real exercise in tenacity or resignation.

But if an activity is labelled "idiot" work because of redundancy, why pick on these two techniques? Why not include tatting simple edgings (all those little half-hitches!), or hemming prom gowns (all those little stitches, for one wearing!), or making buttonholes by hand, or shelling peas?

And just what was meant by "idiot" when these labels were coined? Even though the word has a history of varied meanings — it comes from the Greek for private, personal, nonprofessional, and shares its root with the term idiosyncracy—I assume that it was a reflection on the mental attributes of the person doing the work, or the scant wit required to do it.

In my own experience, there's a strong correlation between idiot work and unfinished work, and "idiot" has less to do with the intelligence required to perform the task than the intelligence and forethought, or lack thereof, that might have prompted me to start it in the first place. A case in point is the first needlepoint project I ever undertook. It wasn't a kit, nor a painted canvas, nor, heaven forbid, one of those pieces where the fun part is already done and only the plain background is left. Rather, it was, or was to have been, a 3-by-5-foot rug for my husband's study, made from vast expanses of raw canvas spliced together, in an adaptation of an M.C. Escher tesselation (knights on horseback jousting in opposite directions, mostly on the diagonal) which I would blow up and transfer with magic markers. I started designing it in October with the idea of finishing it by Christmas.

Every time I looked at that pile of mostly raw materials for the next twenty years I felt like an idiot, in the dictionary sense of silly or foolish. On the other hand, I have edged an entire knitted coat with idiot cord and nearly completed a large afghan in idiot stitch and felt pretty clever.

Query a hundred needleworkers on their idea of idiot work, and I'll bet you'd get at least fifty different answers. What's yours? ❖

Linda Ligon is publisher of PIECEWORK *magazine. Her current idiot work is five bags of homegrown black fleece waiting to be spun into yarn for a handwoven rug.*



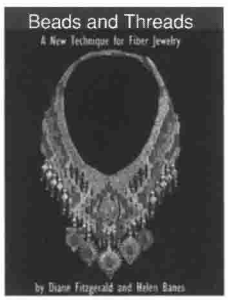
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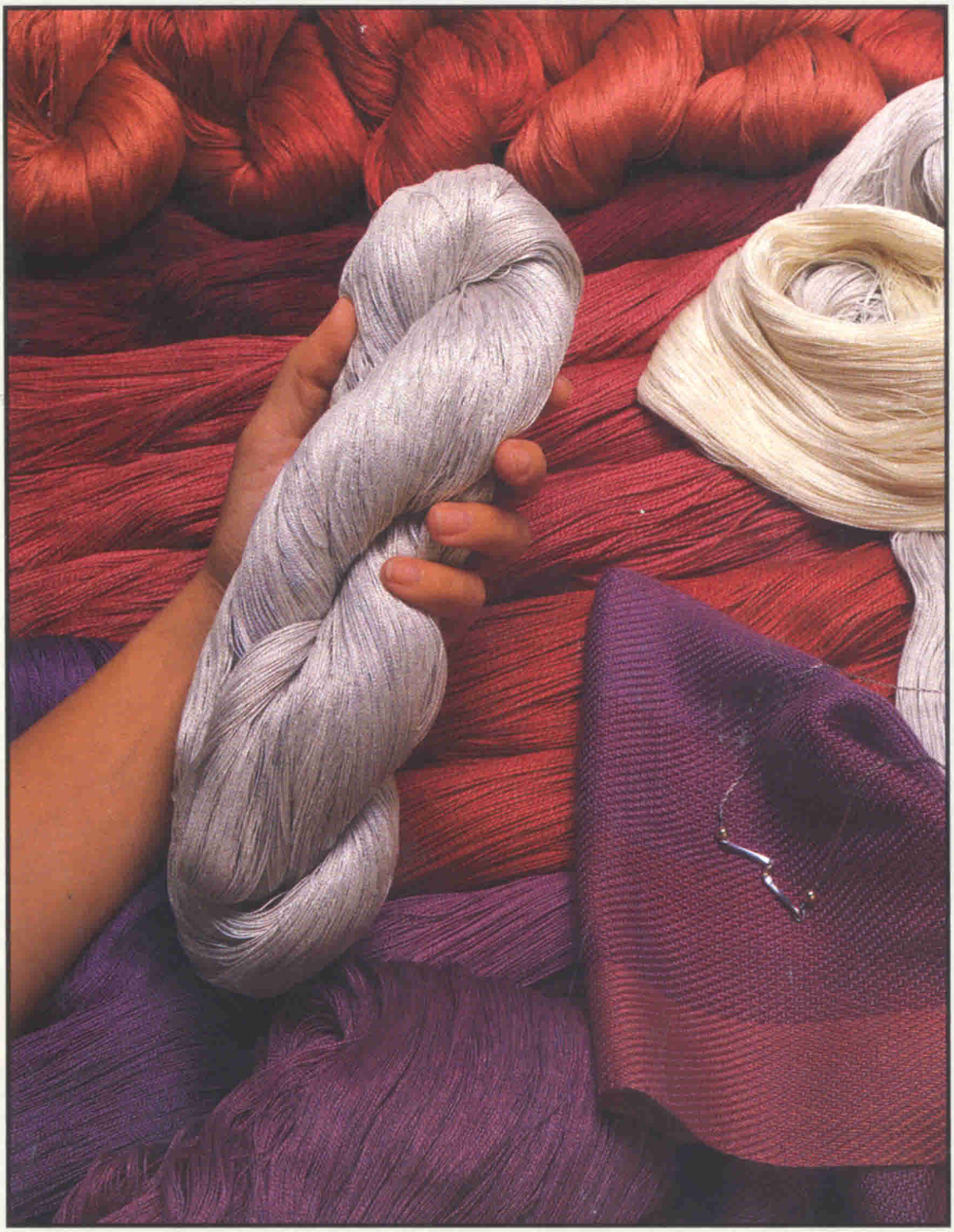
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