



SHELTER:

CRAFTING A
SAFE HOME

Hands-On Art Activity - Textiles and Embroidery

Contemporary Craft

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A History of Community Textiles

Textiles have been used as a signal of welcome in many cultures throughout time. Native Americans in the 20th century used textiles as a way to connect with the land and provide for their families. The Navajo would bless their blankets so that they would only bring good to those who possessed them. Blankets would be hung in their doorways as a subject for prayers and blessings.



In 2000 B.C. Central Asia they would use rugs as decoration as a sign of respect for visiting rulers and guest. Some would reserve their best rugs as a form of savings. The quality of their rugs determined their status and wealth.

In today's society textiles are still used as a sign of welcome. Fresh sheets are put out when guests are welcome into the home. Blankets and quilts are often given as gifts to show love and compassion.



Textiles were often made in the home for the home by women as important objects of care, such as clothes and bedding to keep their families warm and comfortable. Making textiles was considered to be lesser “women’s work,” not fine art. Some said the difference was that fine art was made professionally in the public, not in homes for home use. Fine art was divided by race, gender and class. The implications of this division left women and minority artists to be excluded from being viewed as serious artists (Leone, 2017).

Yet, there is a rich history of using textiles to address serious social problems in resistance efforts. For example, during the U.S. Civil War, abolitionists who fought to end slavery made and sold quilts to support and fund the abolition movement. Quilts were hung along the underground railroad to mark safe houses and patterns were stitched to map escape routes. Another example in U.S. history when

women were seeking the right to vote, suffragettes used quilted and embroidered banners for protest marches. Women employed embroidery, which was closely associated with femininity, to subvert the idea that women only wanted the vote because they wanted to be like men. Quilting bees were common practice sewing circles during which women conversed and connected. Susan B Anthony delivered her first speech about suffrage in Ohio at a quilting bee. Another example of textiles being used subversively in Chile, women embroidered arpilleras, burlap sacks used for goods, to document human rights violations under dictatorship. The goods packaged in the arpilleras were traded abroad, by churches and supporters, and the women’s message about their country’s oppression spread (Leone, 2017).

More recently in 2011, a group called *Bordados por la Paz* (Embroidering for Peace) began stitching names of those lost to the human rights crisis in Mexico that is affecting the citizens, regardless of socioeconomic status. The crisis is Mexican President Felipe Calderón’s “War on Drugs,” a war against the drug cartel. Crafters stitch names with red thread on white handkerchiefs to memorialize the individuals who have died, gone missing, or were displaced and the cloths are publically displayed in the city square (Leone, 2017).



Project Process

1. Welcome and Intro – Learn the definition of the Fiber Arts, History related to fiber arts and community, definition of embroidery, explain embroidery as a mindful/meditative process.
2. Brainstorm – Lead with meditation - breathe deeply and focus on what makes you feel safe. You are encouraged to brainstorm ideas on the paper before going straight to the cloth.
3. Making time – You can use markers to supplement your design. It is encouraged to have at least one element of embroidery in the quilt square.
4. Closing remarks – share what you drew/ what your experience was. Make more to have enough of them to be made into a quilt or invite your friends to join the activity for a community quilt.

Materials

- Fabric Markers
- Scissors
- Embroidery thread (pre threaded)
- Fabric mounted on embroidery hoops
- Needle threaders
- Air erasable markers for embroidery design
- Handouts: Embroidery handout and worksheet guide (next three pages)

Instructions

1. In the spirit of continuing the tradition of using textiles as a symbol of welcome, we invite you to embroider a square of fabric that will be part of a larger quilt. The quilts will be hung in shelters around Pittsburgh and act as a sign of welcome to the people that pass through there. Meditate on a time that you were in a place where you felt safe and welcome. Who was there? What sorts of things were around you?

2. Think about how you would visually share a part of this place with someone else. Now create a line drawing based off of what you were meditating on. A Line Drawing is a drawing made out of only lines (no shading). Use the box below to sketch ideas.



3. Next you will draw your idea onto the square of fabric. Use the disappearing ink pens to draw a base for where you will embroider.

4. Use the embroidery hand out to instruct you on techniques. Trace with the thread the lines you drew with the disappearing ink.

5. If you wish, fill in your drawing with the permanent fabric markers.

How to Embroider

The Straight stitch



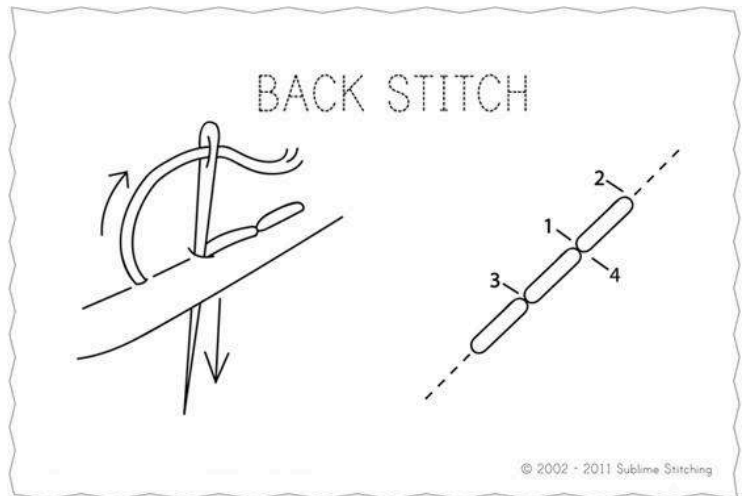
1. Start by creating a knot at the end of your thread
2. Run the needle through the backside of the fabric towards the front so the knot can not be seen on

your embroidery

3. After you pull your needle all the way through you will be at point A then find your point B and stick your needle through to the backside of the fabric.
4. Find your point C and then repeat step 3 until you're finished.

The Back Stitch

1. Follow step 1,2,&3 of the Straight Stitch
2. After completing those steps of the straight stitch, you will need to find point "3" shown in the diagram to the right. You will be starting from the back of the fabric and pulling through towards the front



3. You will then sew towards the back where your point "1" started
4. Repeat this process until you have completed your line.