

So Sew Art

The Art of Embroidery

Embroidery

Embroidery is the craft of decorating fabric or other materials using a needle to apply thread or yarn. Embroidery may also incorporate other materials such as pearls, beads, quills, and sequins.

Embroidery is the art of decorating material, primarily textile fabric, by means of a needle and thread (and sometimes fine wire). The basic techniques include crewel work, needlepoint, cross-stitch embroidery, and quilting, as well as quillwork and featherwork.

Bayeux Tapestry



The Bayeux Tapestry is an embroidered cloth nearly 70 meters long and 50 centimeters tall that depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England concerning William, Duke of Normandy, and Harold, Earl of Wessex, later King of England, and culminating in the Battle of Hastings. Celebrated for outstanding craftsmanship and even peculiar depictions that are still finding their way to contemporary audiences via vibrant memes.

Now, the most recent reason for which this artifact is at the center of public attention is **the announcement of its restoration**. In 2018, the French President Emmanuel Macron announced that **the Bayeux Tapestry will be loaned to the UK most probably in 2022**, and even the administrative arrangement was signed between the French and British Ministries of Culture while the details regarding the exact location remained a mystery. The gesture of sending an artifact depicting the defeat of the English in the post-Brexit period was **interpreted by some as disputable and seemed like a blatant mockery of Brexiters**.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrIE2I2mlfk>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8OPQ_28mdo (4.56 mins)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtGoBZ4D4_E&t=264s (animated)



Mexican Embroidery

Embroidery has a long history in Mexico. Most textiles from the pre-Hispanic era have perished, damaged by heat and humidity, but surviving cloth fragments prove that decorative stitching was sometimes used on clothing. When Spanish conquistadores reached Mexico in 1519, they were full of praise for the achievements of spinners, dyers, weavers and embroiderers. After the conquest, Spanish needlework skills – including a wide variety of stitches, many of which are thought to have originated in ancient Egypt, Persia and other parts of the Near East – were widely taught in mission centers. Further inspiration was later provided by textiles imported from China and the Philippines. Today Mexican women embroider home-woven and bought cloth with a vast range of stitches and designs.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= 5PnFndlo 0>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yy1fq6CZT-Q> (3 mins no words)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASrWoaCj1Ss> (29 minutes)

Otomi Embroidery

Otomi embroidery is an **embroidery style created by the Otomi people of central Mexico** that has become popular in recent years. The designs are filled with symbols based on native flora and fauna, local beliefs and even primitive cave drawings found in the Hidalgo region where many of the Otomi reside.

- The Otomi people live in the Sierra Madre Oriental mountains in the central state of Hidalgo.
- Legend has it that the prints' figures, birds, and animals were inspired by nearby cave drawings.
- The juxtaposition of negative and positive space makes the patterns appear graphic and modern, especially in monochromatic versions.
- Native artists draw all flora and fauna by hand, never using stencils. The typical menagerie includes animals like armadillos, roosters, squirrels, and deer.
- Otomi-inspired prints are now showing up at mass retailers like Target.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=My8udk3E0WM&t=15s>







Indian Embroidery

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbyE1JEJug0&t=45s> (3.21)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blWM7pxaxNo> (8.21)

Beetle Wing Embroidery

The iridescent wing cases sparkled on headcovers, blouses, and accessories. Beetle-wing-case embroidery also became popular with western women who made gowns and accessories out of beetle-wing-case embroidered muslins and nets. The shimmering emerald colour is not a pigmentation but a result of the microscopic structure of the cases themselves, which naturally reflects green-blue light. Although they were valued for the permanence of their colour, durability and relative hardness, the wing cases were still fragile and could snap, so were often used only as trim.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWb7PeSyRLo>





Ari Embroidery

Ari work is a kind of chain-stitching done using a hooked needle called an awl. The technique likely originated in the Mochi community, a group that traditionally made and repaired footwear. Originally developed for embroidering decorative elements onto leather shoes and horse trappings (harnesses and ornamental coverings), ari was later adapted for use on cloth.

Ari embroideries were being exported westward from Gujarat, in the west of India, towards the Persian Gulf and beyond. This type of [decorated needlework](#) appears in Iran and parts of the Middle East, especially Syria, where it is known as [Ghabani work](#). It is also thought that *ari* work was introduced into Kashmir in the sixteenth century.

There are various types of *ari* work, depending on the type of [ground material](#), the [threads](#) being used and the end product. In Kutch and Gujarat, for instance, *ari* work is used to decorate leather items such as bags, saddles and shoes. The [ground material](#) for *ari* embroidery is sometimes stretched on a frame and then worked. In other cases it is simply held in the hand, depending again on the type of ground material being used.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbyE1JEJug0&t=69s>







Shisha Embroidery

Shisheh or abhla bharat embroidery, or mirror-work, is a type of embroidery which attaches small pieces of mirrors or reflective metal to fabric. Mirror embroidery is common throughout Asia, and today can be found in the traditional embroidery of the Indian subcontinent, Afghanistan, China, and Indonesia.

Shisha embroidery originated in the 17th century in India. People in lower classes mimicked the jeweled garments of the wealthy by decorating fabric with silver beetles' wings and chips of [mica](#). When a process for manufacturing tiny mirror discs was developed during the [Mughal Empire](#), these tiny mirrors or *shisha* were swiftly adopted for fabric embellishment.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzjof2HgKXw> (1 minute)





Manish Arora



Manish Arora is an Indian fashion designer based in New Delhi. In early 2011, he was appointed creative director of the womenswear collection of the French fashion house Paco Rabanne, although he left the company in May 2012.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BceP90-KwKo&t=23s>







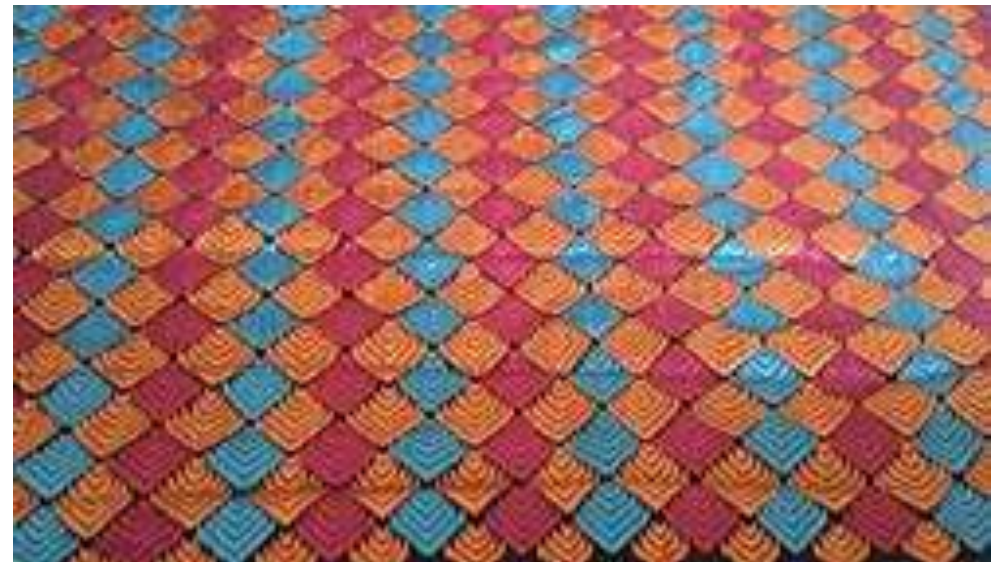
SS 2018

MANISH ARORA

Phulkari Embroidery

Phulkari, which literally translates into 'flower work', has a history etched in the culture of Punjab. Spun from the charkha this spectacular style of embroidery is patterned on odinis, shawls, kurtis and [chunris](#). The main characteristics of this embroidery are the use of darn stitch on the wrong side of cloth with colored silken thread. A face of fashion that finds its first mentions in Punjabi folklore of the romantic protagonists Heer and Ranjha, Phulkari is a dream weaver for every Punjabi girl.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6tiOyn7wic&t=18s>





Chinese Embroidery

Chinese embroidery has a long history since the Neolithic age. Because of the quality of silk fibre, most Chinese fine embroideries are made in silk. Some ancient vestiges of silk production have been found in various Neolithic sites dating back 5,000–6,000 years in China. Currently the earliest real sample of silk embroidery discovered in China is from a tomb in Mashan in Hubei province identified with the [Zhanguo](#) period (5th–3rd centuries BC). After the opening of [Silk Route](#) in the [Han dynasty](#), the silk production and trade flourished. In the 14th century, the Chinese silk embroidery production reached its high peak. Several major silk embroidery styles had been developed, like Song Jin (宋锦 Song embroidery) in Suzhou, Yun Jin (云锦 Cloud embroidery) in Nanjing and Shu Jin (蜀锦 Shu embroidery) in Sichuan.

Today, most handwork has been replaced by machinery, but some very sophisticated production is still hand-made. Modern Chinese silk embroidery by hand is still common in southern China.

- <https://clarksvilleembroidery.com/embroidery-tutorials/av-r8WXGl0PgG4.html> (9 mins)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jp1AYYDv8Ho&t=6s>









Styles

Su Xiu (苏绣) – Suzhou embroidery is crafted in areas around [Suzhou](#), [Jiangsu](#) Province, having a history dating back 2,000 years. It is famous for its beautiful patterns, elegant colours, variety of stitches, and consummate craftsmanship. Its stitching is meticulously skillful, coloration subtle and refined. Suzhou artists are able to use more than 40 needlework and a 1,000 different types of threads to make embroidery, typically with nature and environment themes such as flowers, birds, animals and even gardens on a piece of cloth. A rare subset is Su double-sided embroidery^[1] which requires ultimate skill and artistry. The front and back of the piece may have different designs, but the ends are not knotted but woven in so the back can't be distinguished.

Xiang Xiu (湘绣) – Hunan embroidery comes from areas around [Changsha](#), [Hunan](#) Province. It is distinct for its starkly elegant black, white and gray colouration. Its emphasis is on contrasts of light and shade that highlight the pattern texture to give a three-dimensional effect. Xiang embroidery composition combines void and solid imagery, utilizing empty space in the same way as Chinese [ink and wash paintings](#).

Yue Xiu/Guang Xiu (粤绣/广绣) – Guangdong embroidery is crafted in [Chaozhou](#), [Guangdong](#) Province. It is composed of intricate but symmetrical patterns, vibrant colours, varied stitches and a defined weave. Its use of primary colors, light and shade are reminiscent of western paintings.

Shu Xiu (蜀绣) – Sichuan embroidery comes from areas around [Chengdu](#), [Sichuan](#) Province. It is among the oldest known embroidery styles in Chinese embroidery history. Its raw materials are satin and colored silk, its craftsmanship painstaking and refined. The emphasis is on even stitching, delicate coloration, and local flavor. Sichuan embroidery is used to decorate quilt covers, pillowcases, garments, shoes and painted screens.

Russian Gold Embroidery

The art of embroidery with the use of metal, gold, silver, or copper threads is called Goldwork. Goldwork embroidery masters usually used imitation of gold threads, gold-coated silver, and even if they used gold, it contained a very low percent of real gold. Originated in Asia 2000 years ago, it reached a high level of skill in the Medieval England, all over Europe, and Russia.

Beautiful Goldwork was used in church vestments, hangings, later in clothing and furnishings of the royalty and nobility, then – military and official regalia. In Russia, more than in any other country, Goldwork is most commonly used for the highest-quality church vestments and art embroidery, for occasional and special use, due to both the expense of the materials and the time to create the embroidery, and because the threads will not hold up to frequent laundering.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lUeIGwyK5s>





Linda Behar

These 4 x 6 photorealistic embroideries of salt marshes are created by American artist Linda Behar. All Behar's embroideries are based on her own photographs, which are as integral to the work as the embroidery itself. Each photograph is meticulously planned; the time of day, lighting conditions, the weather and the tides are all taken into consideration.

Once Behar has the perfect photograph, she prints it onto cotton broadcloth stiffened with contact paper. Using machine embroidery, Behar blocks in the main areas of color to build up a workable thickness then builds up depth and texture with layer upon layer on hand stitching.

Behar's intricate criss-cross stitches resemble subtle brushstrokes, catching the movement of the grass and reflections on the water. With this measured method, each tiny piece can take up to 4 to 6 weeks to complete.











Aurora Molina

Miami artist Aurora Molina's interdisciplinary fiber art practice is dedicated to social change and raising awareness of far-reaching issues such as ageism, the objectification of beauty, the failings of government and political apathy, anti-immigration and the border separation of families, and the mistreatment of indigenous communities, to name just a few.

Using the tools of embroidery, sculpture-making, drawing, photography, and video, she uses the radical potential of fiber art to communicate ideas about social and political issues. Her multifaceted platform provides a sustained and powerful critique of a society that "dismisses" the elderly as they become invisible and hidden from everyday life.

- https://www.auroramolina.com/?mc_cid=77d4ab5b9d&mc_eid=b53aca9b9e











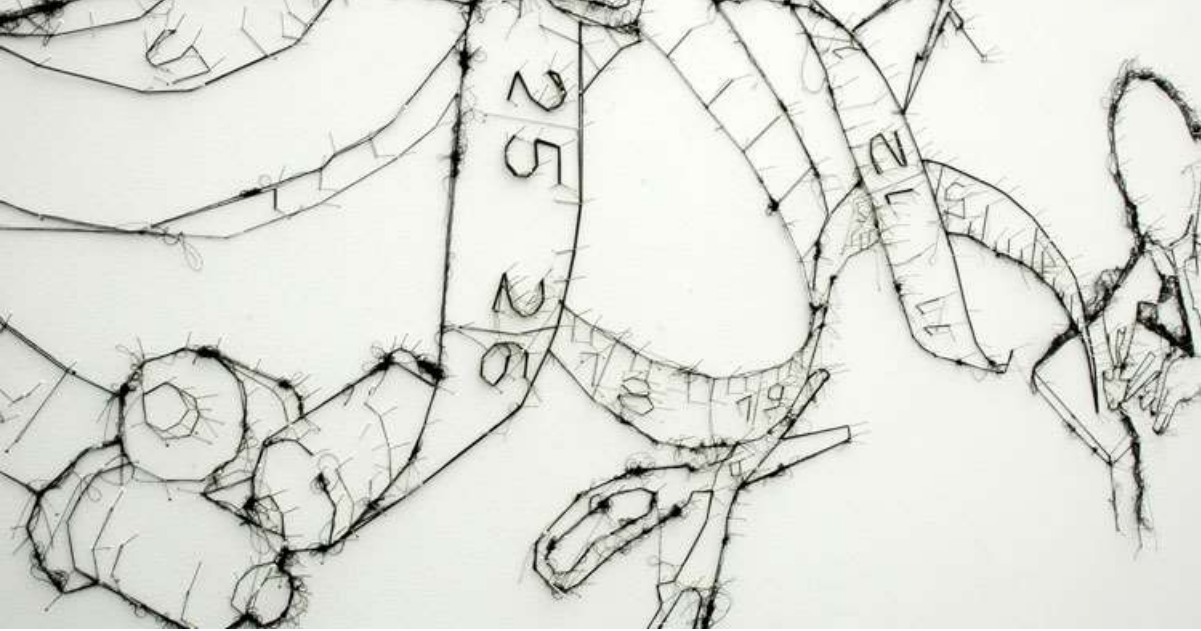


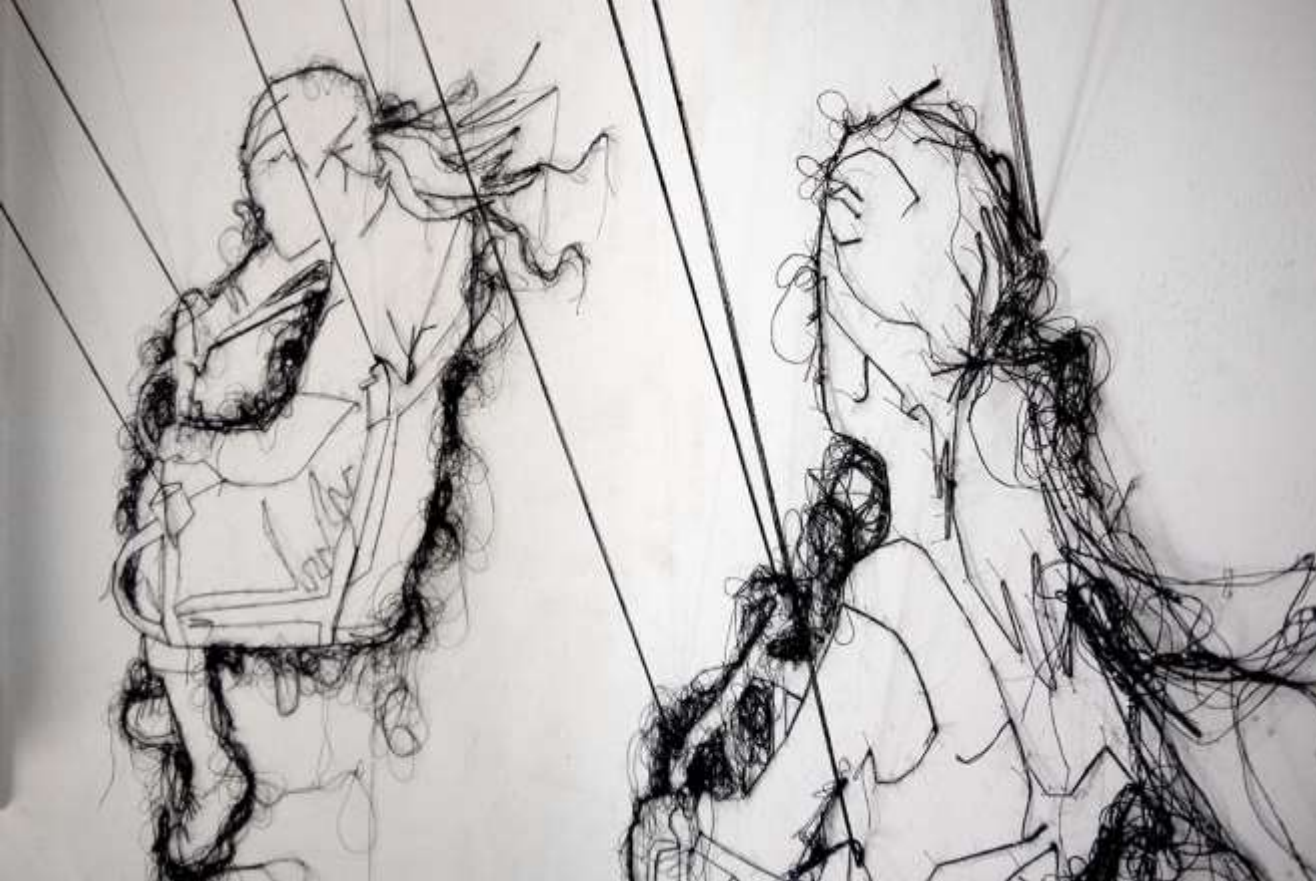
Debbie Smyth

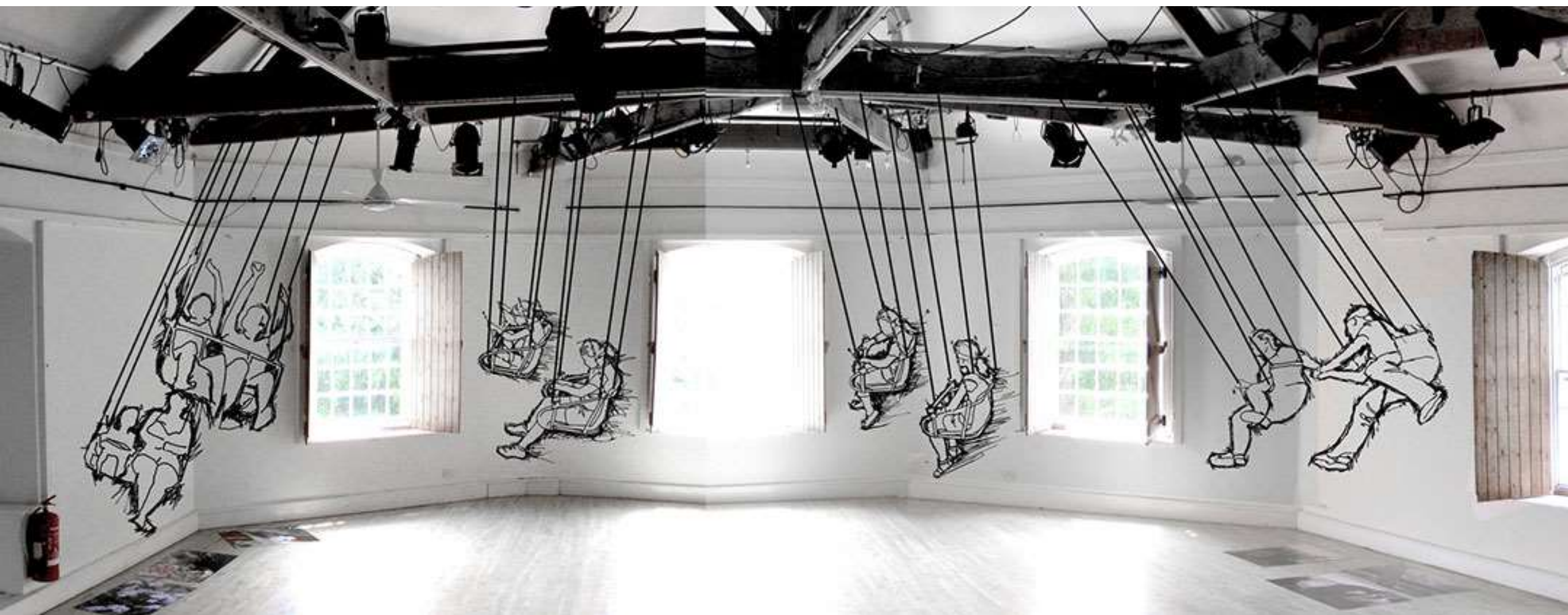
Debbie Smyth is an **Irish textile artist**. She studied Art, Manual Work and Design, not to mention Contemporary Textile at the Wales School of Arts. Since 2009, her refined and contemporary work include large frescoes, thread and needle drawings on a large 2D or 3D scale.

- <https://www.debbie-smyth.com/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qH39vzd3Ot0> (1 min)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0GdpGBJeww> (4.23 mins)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tA3rauXW6r0&t=24s> (short)









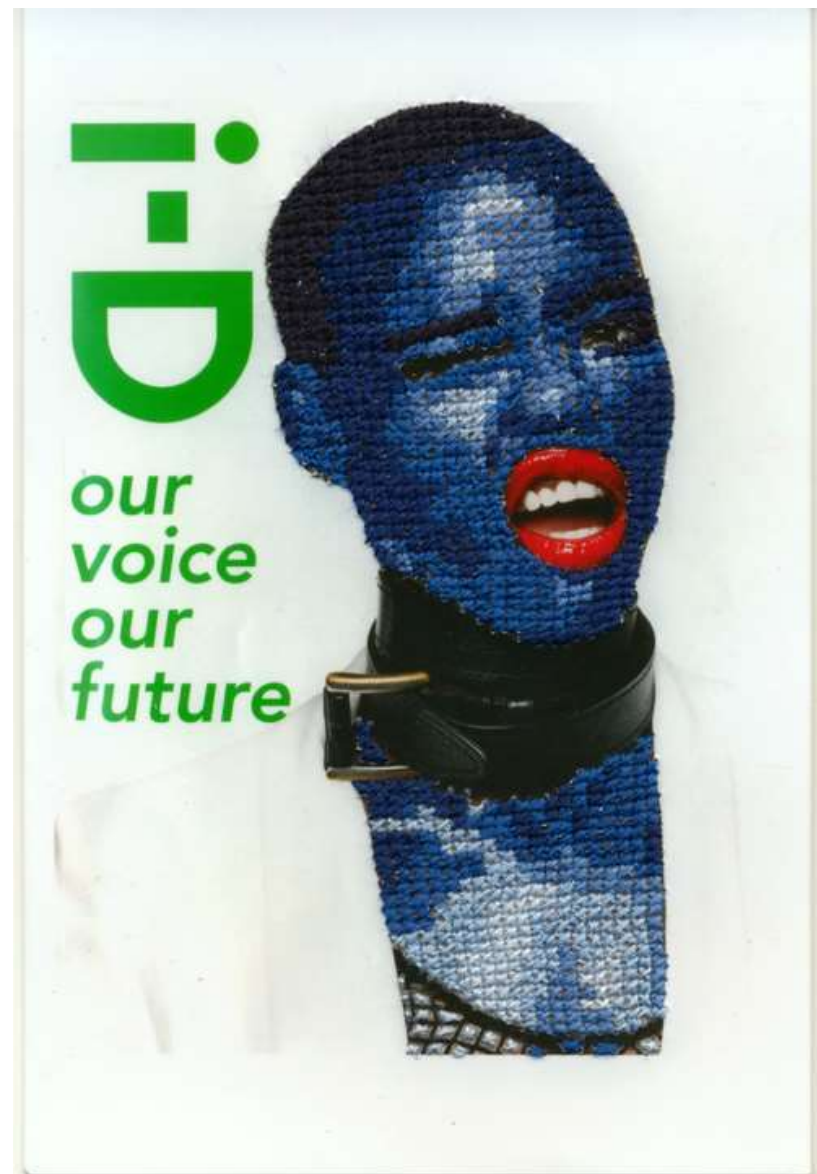




Inge Jacobsen

Inge Jacobsen is a Irish-Danish textile artist who uses embroidery to appropriate commercial images.





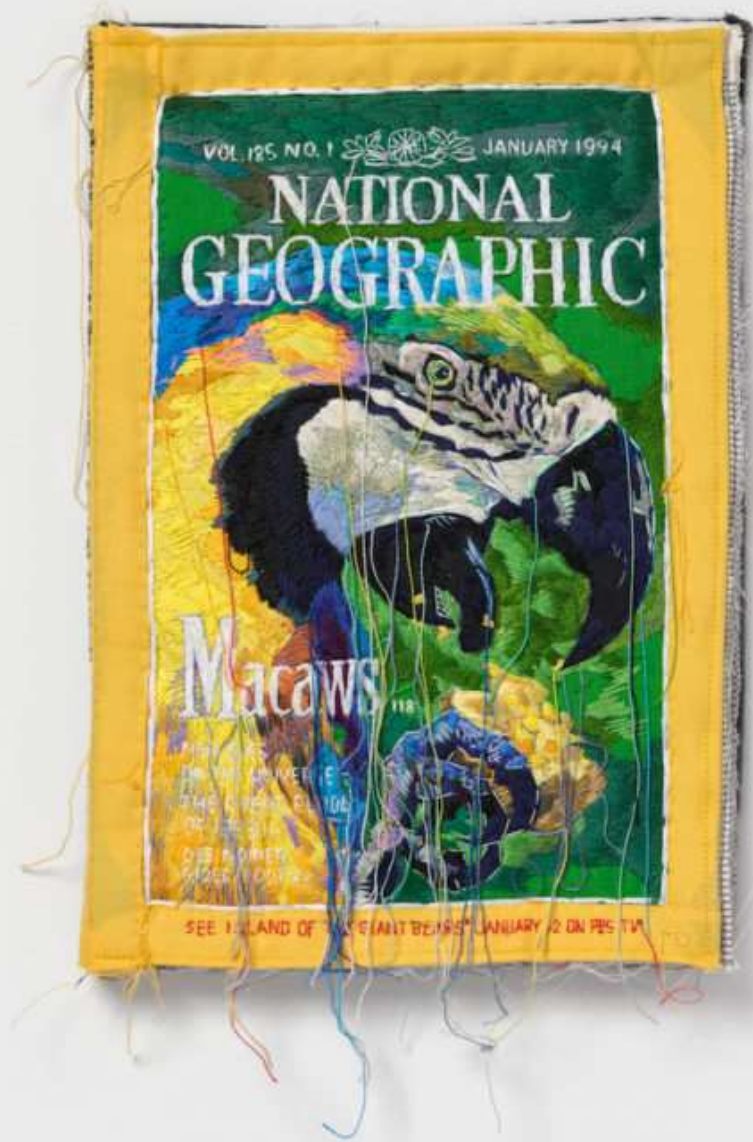


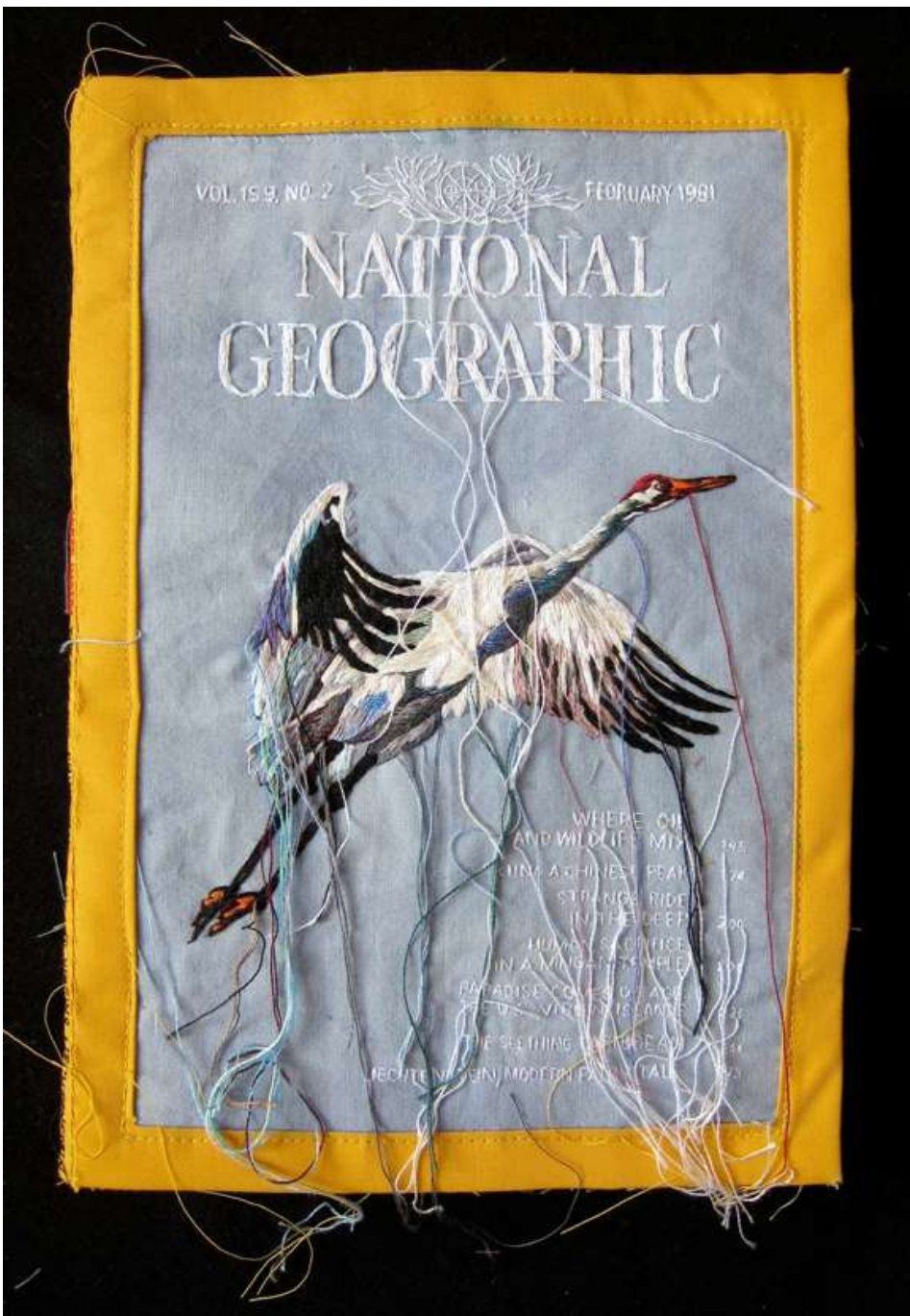
Lauren DiCioccio

In 2005 I started working in “fiber”, using hand-sewing and hand-embroidery to make a body of work that explored the presence, and disappearance, of objects common to day-to-day life and the relationships we make to them. The materials, tools and time-intensive labor associated with the material conjure opposing feelings of precious and pathetic that these ubiquitous, and often disposable or overlooked, objects possess. As these mementos and artifacts of the everyday obsolesce, my work questions how the loss of their presence is felt, and why.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji6i4U6zmbs&t=3s> (no words)







Ana Teresa Barbosa

Ana Teresa Barboza is a Peruvian textile artist. Barboza was born and raised in Lima, Peru. Her works are "three-dimensional textile art that depicts natural forms such as plant life and landscapes." She is "known for her "labour-intensive, mixed-media works that use patchwork, knitting or embroidery."

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iVg6qNSTnM>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbEjtfbrTBs>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBUmo07G0eW>

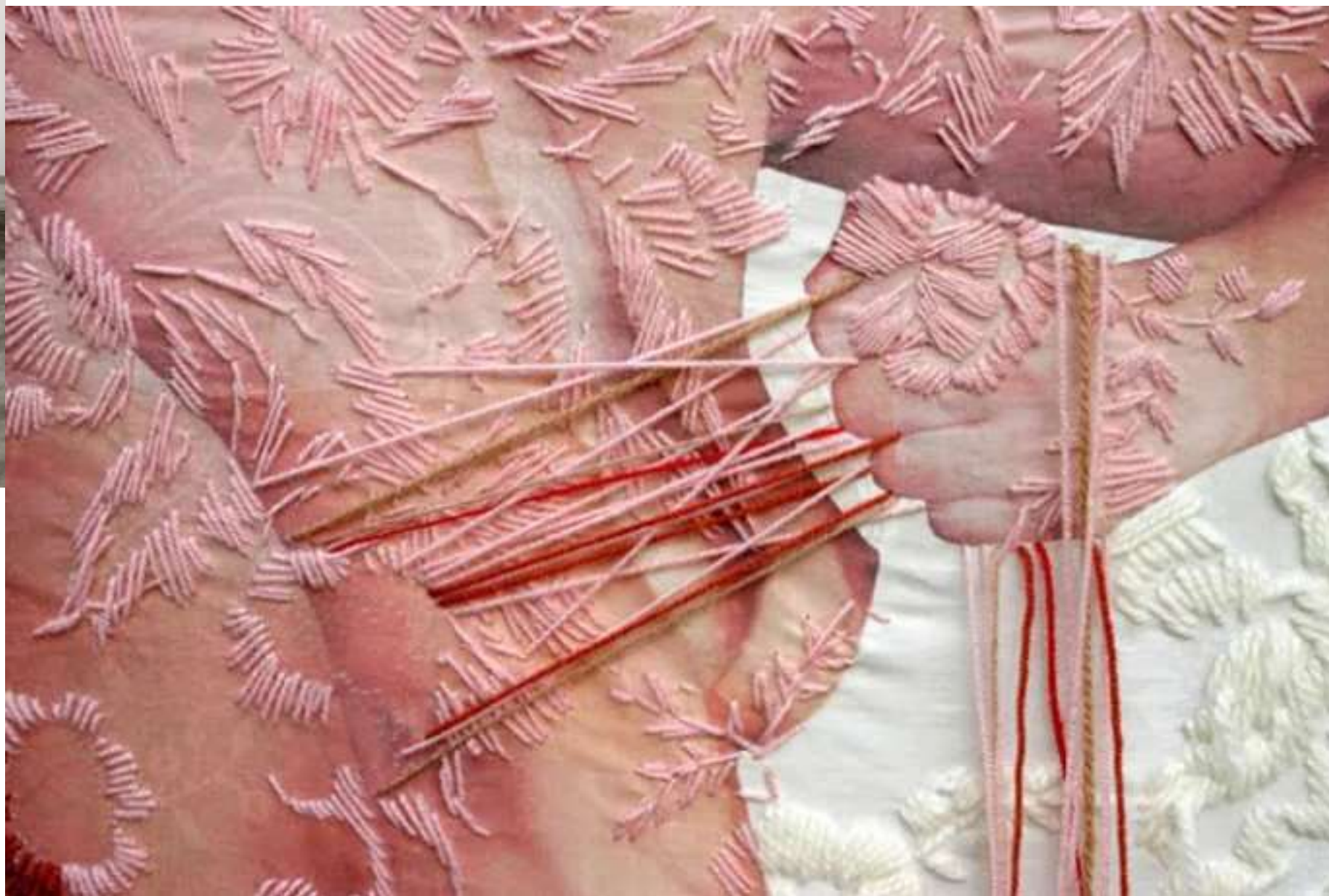












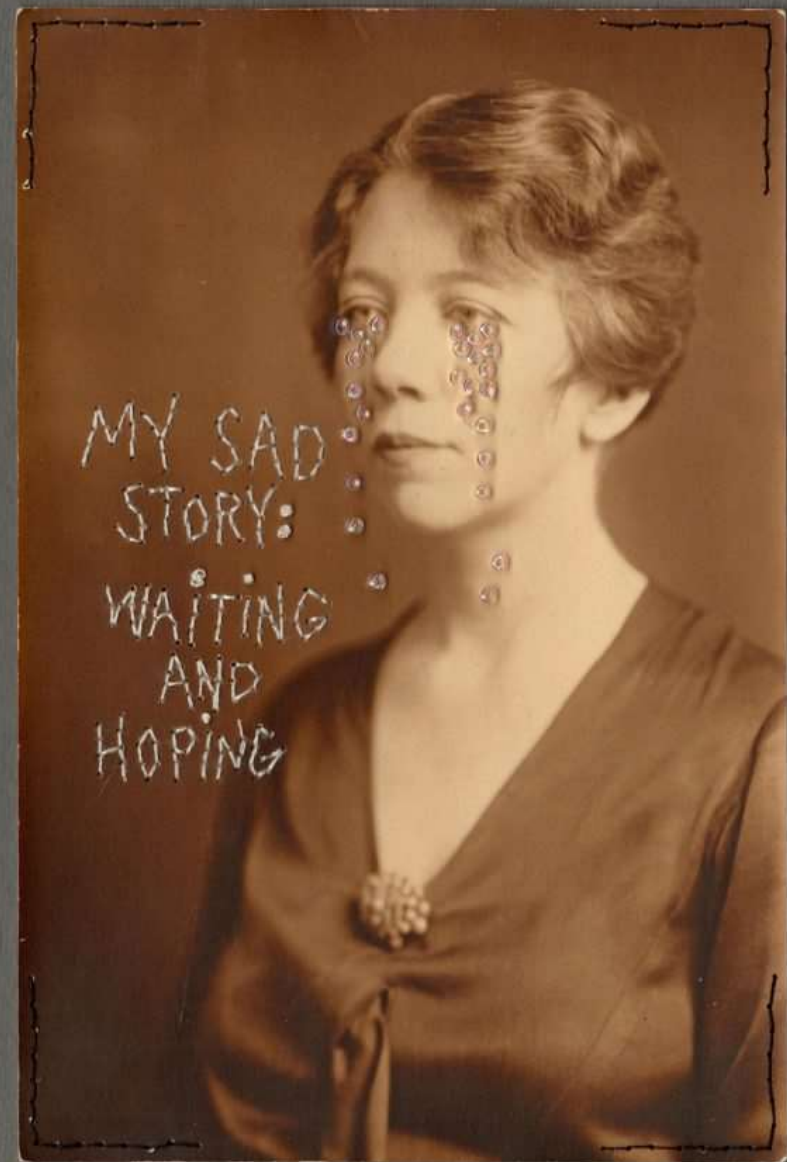
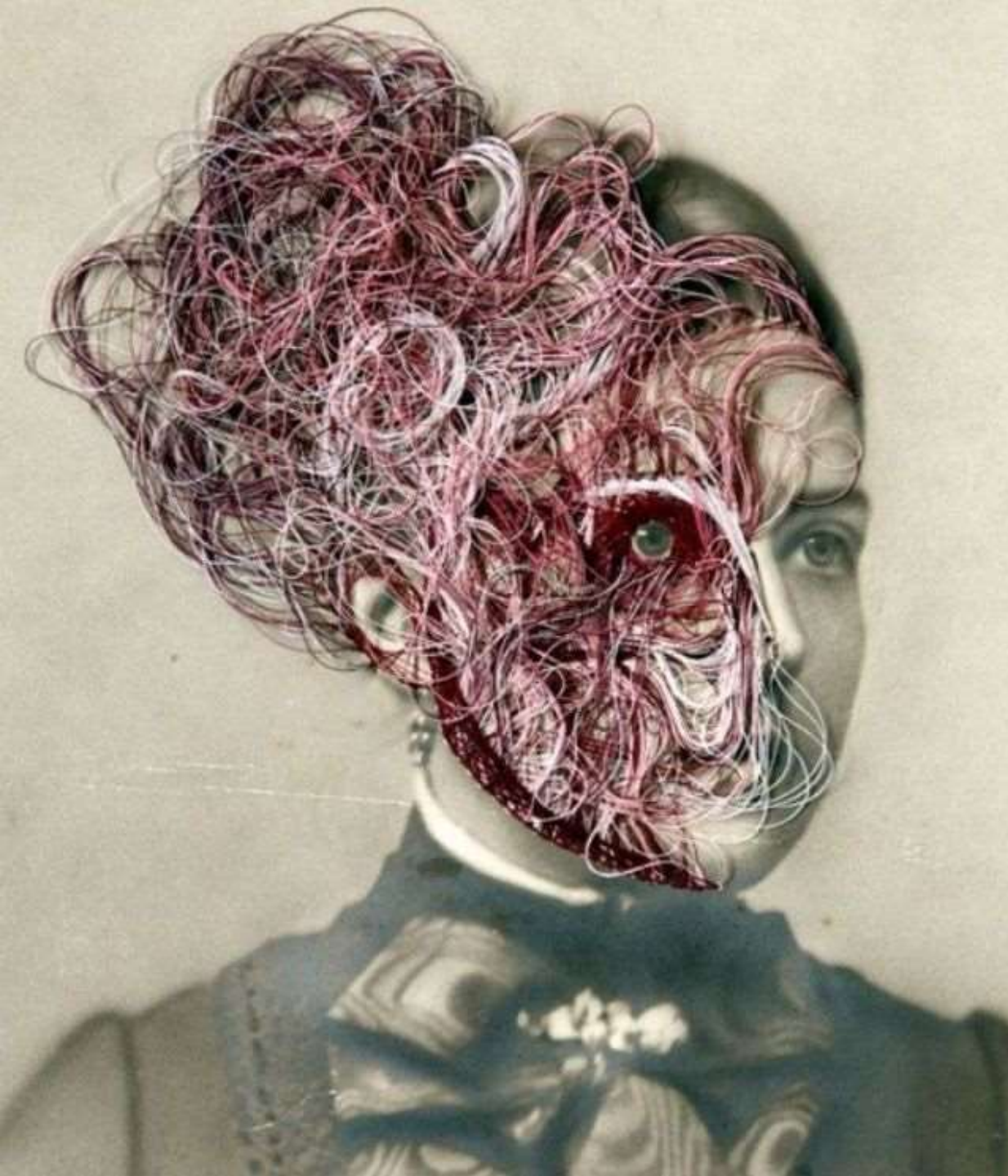


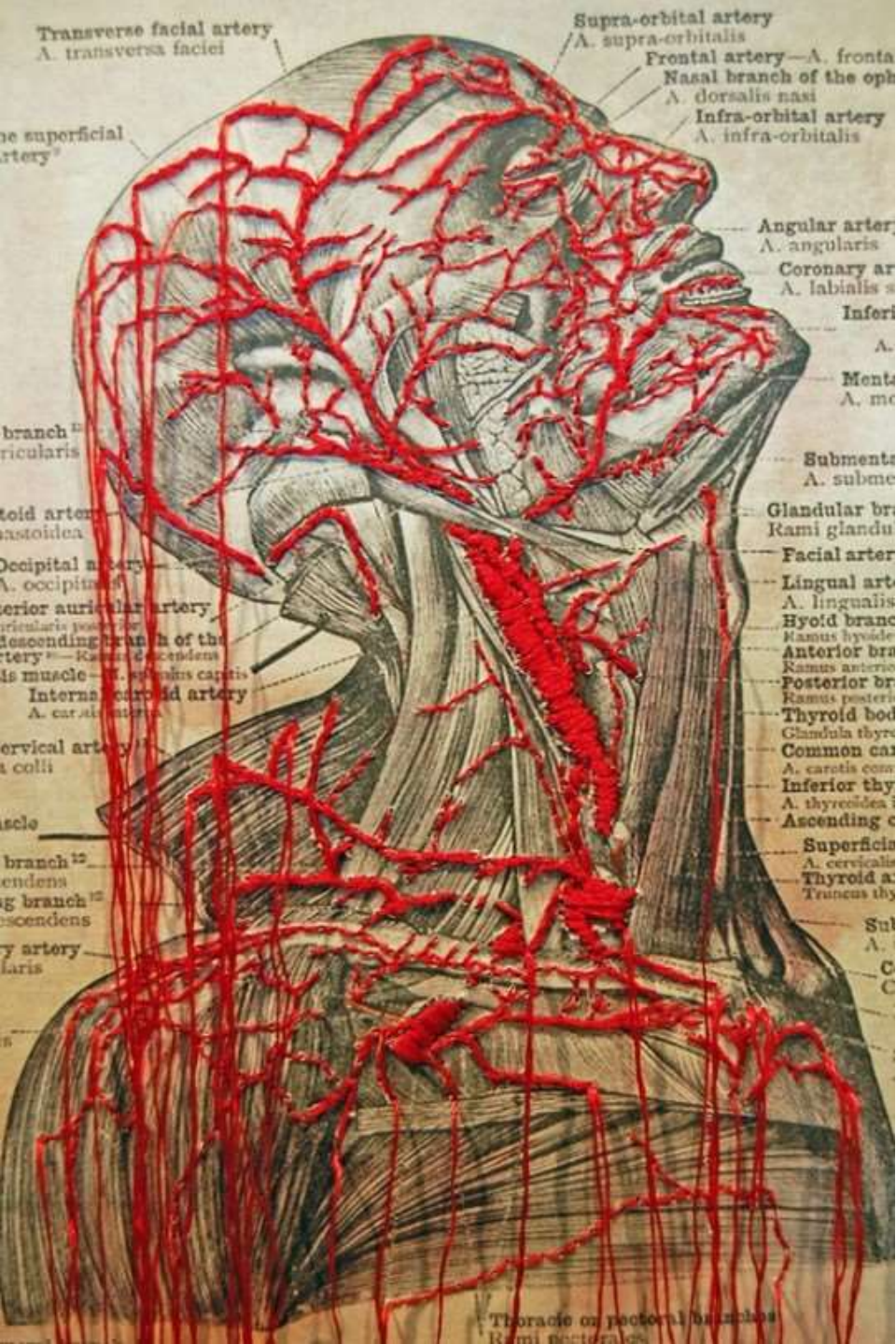
Lynn Skordal

Lynn Skordal has been described as a collage, embroidery and mixed media artist. It's therefore no surprise that her work is eclectic; often made from stamps found in the street, vintage pictures, magazines and books. She uses whatever she finds and inspires her to create Munchesque dreamscapes or bizarre yet alluring alternate realities. All of which are designed to 'alarm, startle or provoke.'

<https://www.sofst.org/lynn-skordal-alternate-reality/>









Merideth Woolnough

Merideth Woolnough's elegant embroidered drawings capture the beauty and fragility of nature in knotted threads. Vibrant coloured structures of organic shapes hover effortlessly above the surface, elegant and enchanting.

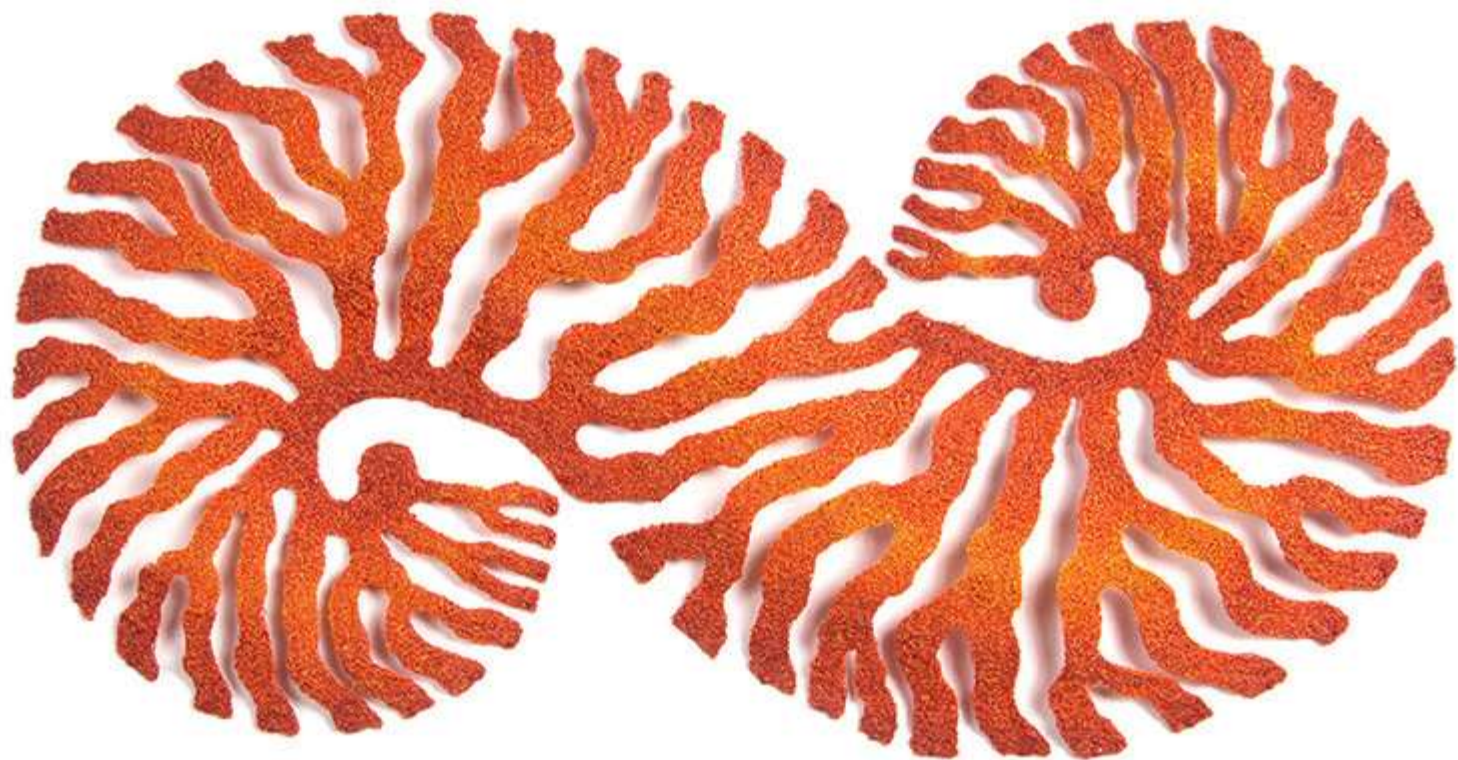
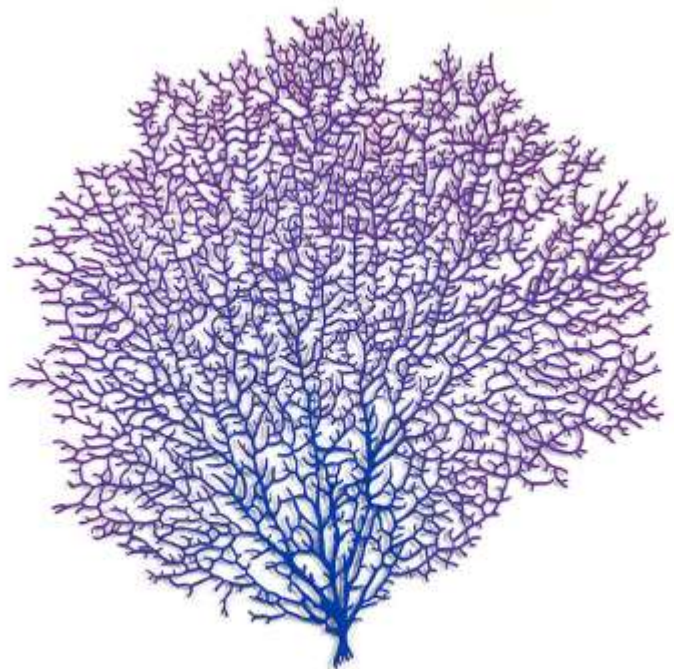
Through the use of freehand machine embroidery and soluble materials, Merideth is creating the natural world anew. The delicate application of the simplest of stitches has been used to create wondrous embroidered networks that revere the beauty of life itself and inspire us to rejoice at the world we live in.

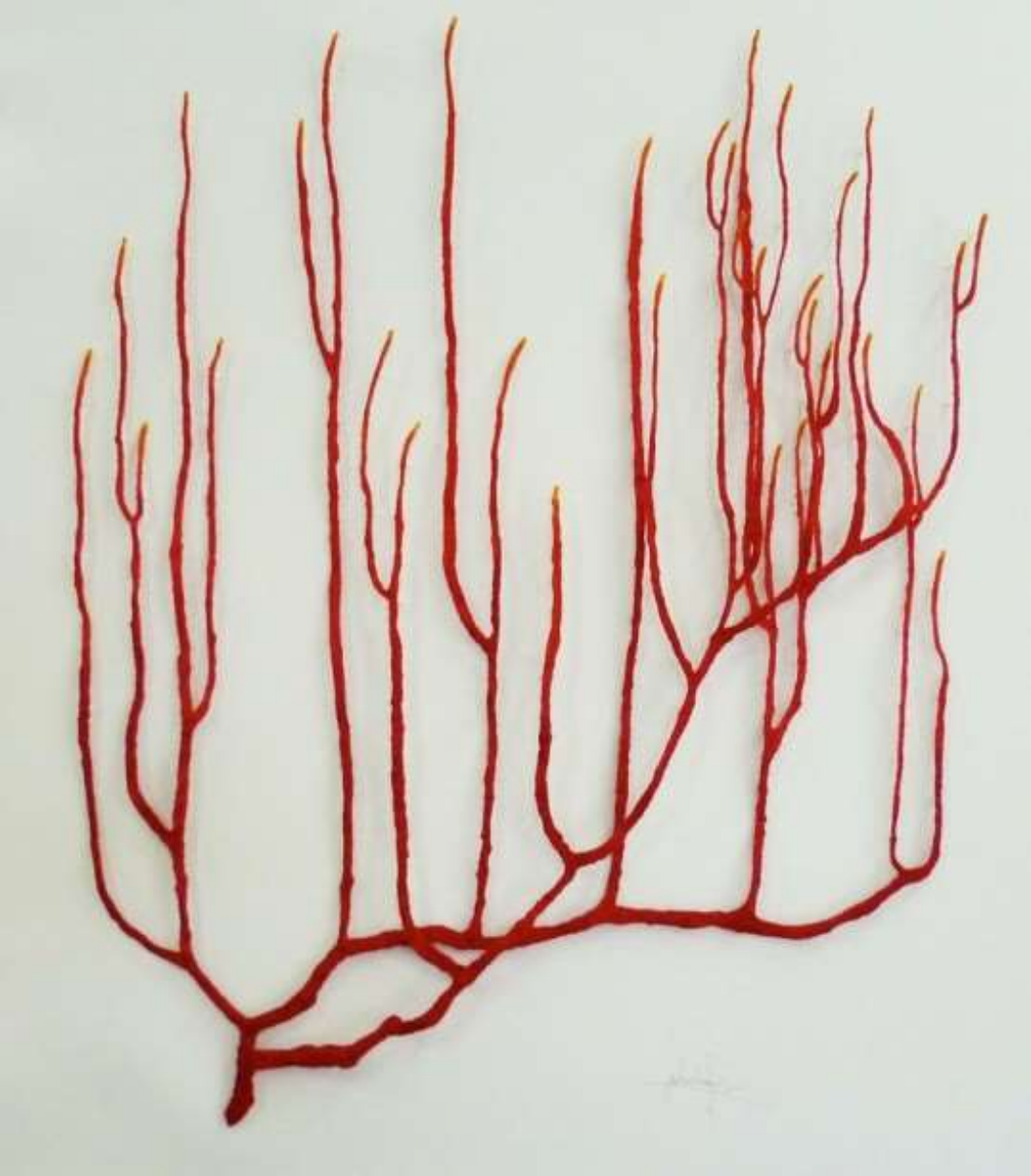
Merideth takes direct reference from physical specimens when creating new pieces, taking care to examine and understand the construction of her subjects.

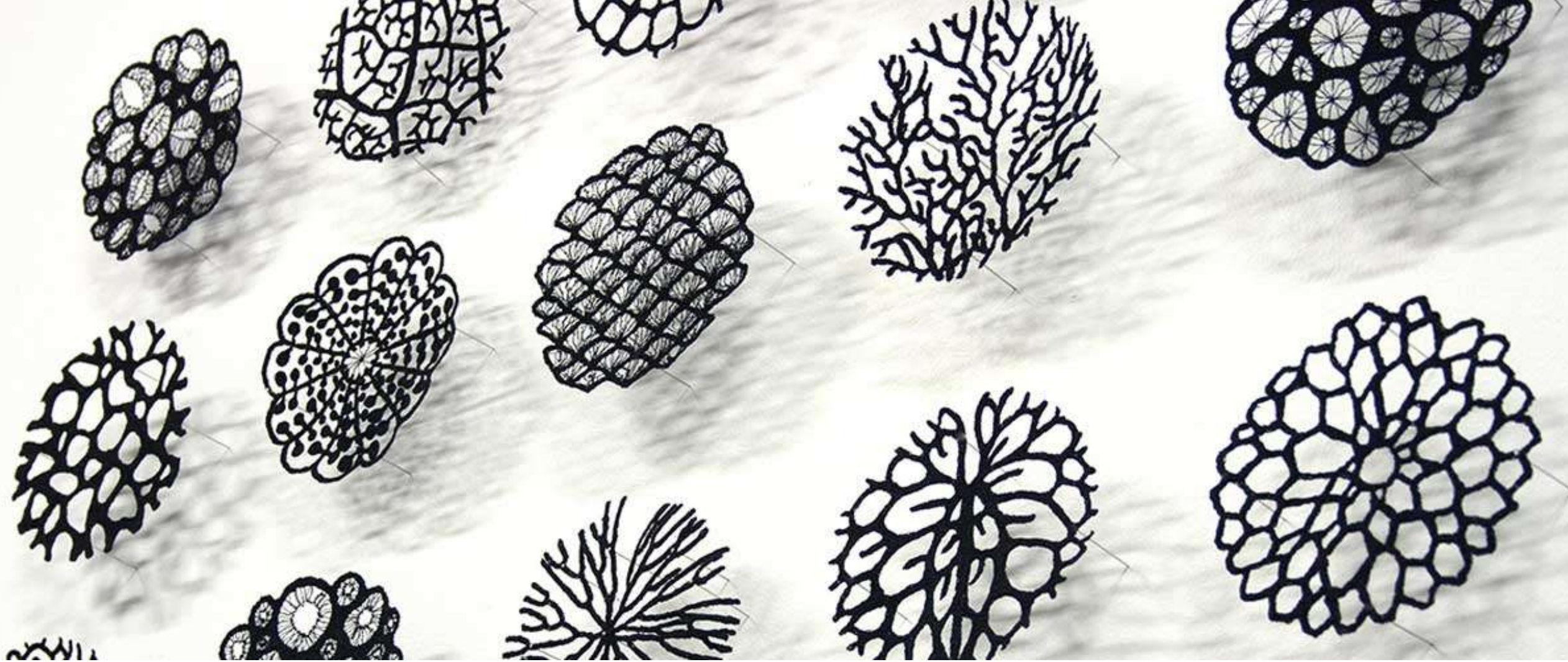
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sG2rj17brY> (4 mins)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yn4yKIMmPAc> (24 mins)











Sarah Walton



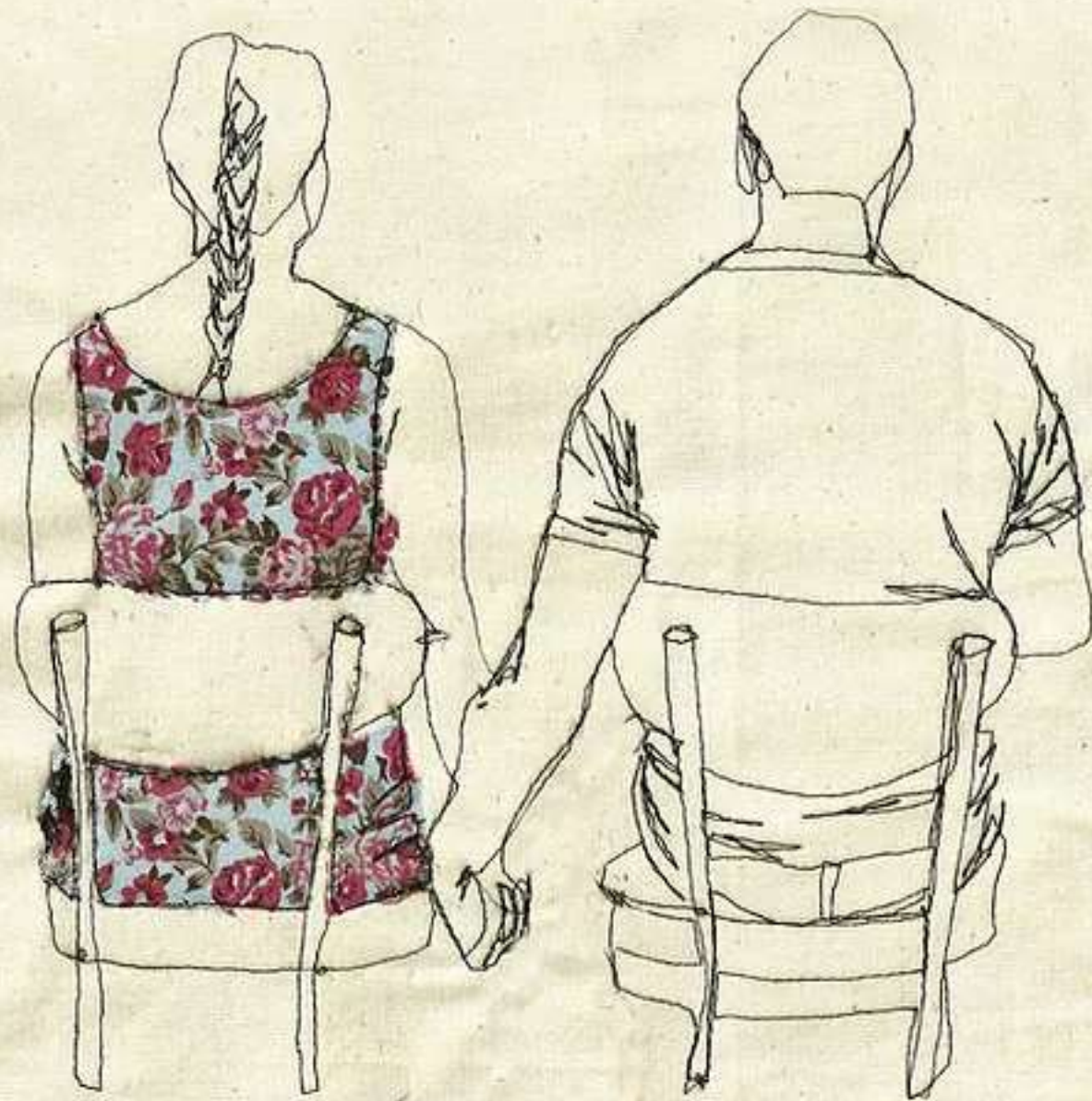
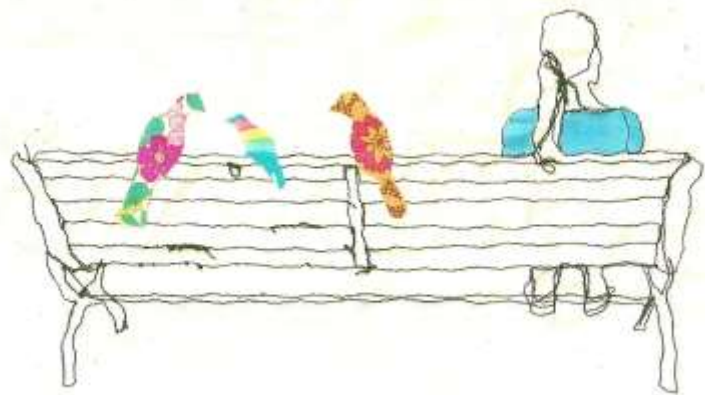
I create illustrations using my old Singer sewing machine, with the needle as my pencil and the fabric as my paint. I've been creating pieces since I inherited the sewing machine from my Nana as a teenager, and I've been selling my embroidered illustration since my mid-twenties, mainly via Etsy. I create one-off commissions, and I've also completed projects for International publications such as Libelle, Flow Magazine and New York Times. I've also been featured in a number of illustration books, such as Illustration Now! 5. In 2019, I designed the packaging for a limited edition coffee for Taylors of Harrogate.

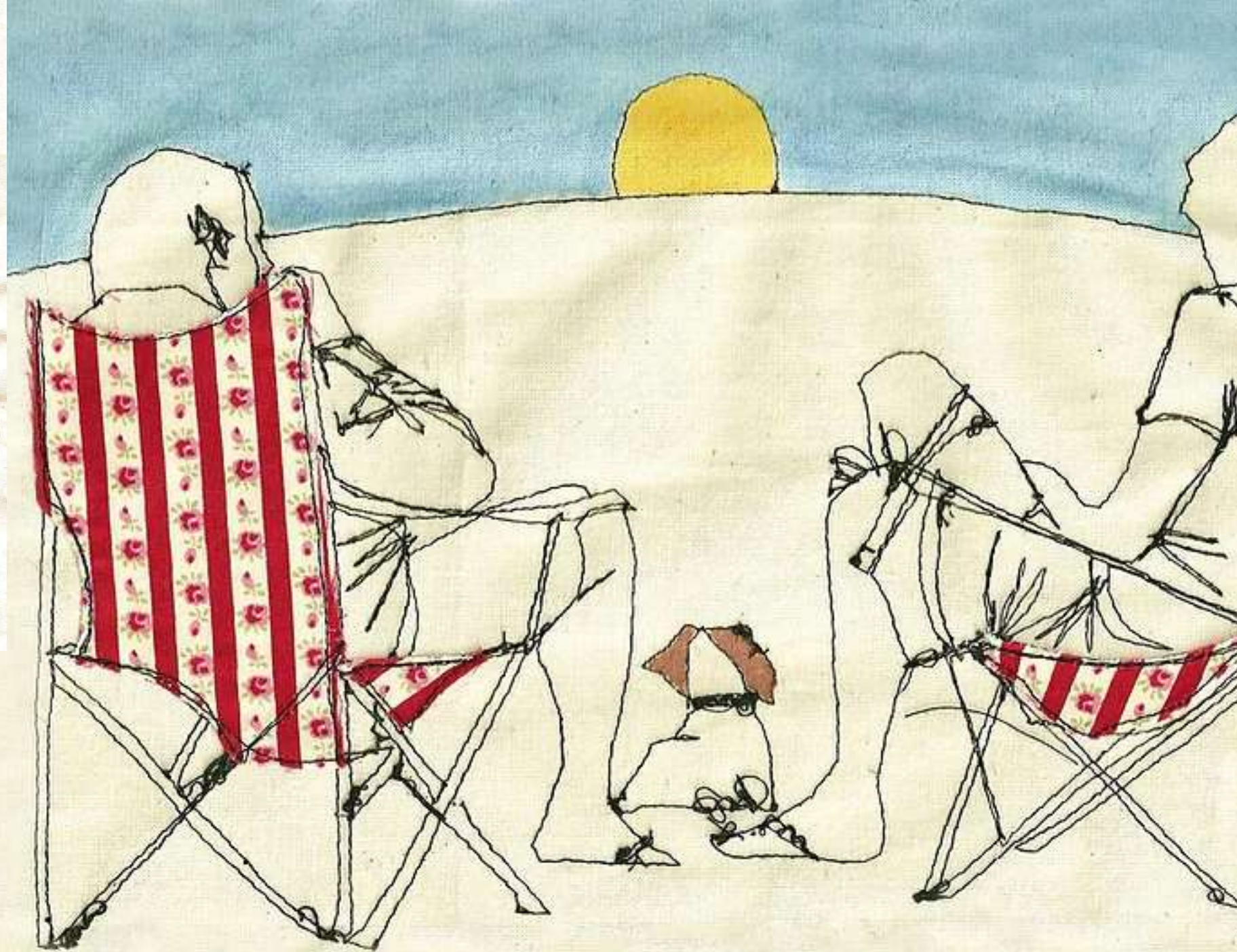
I create each piece as a collage. Usually I start off by drawing sketches, but I have been known to get straight on the machine! Once I have the initial black thread 'outline', I will add bursts of colourful fabric, creating more layers until I feel the piece is complete. Inspiration comes from every day life, nature, art, people, fashion. I love the decorative style of Gustav Klimt, the jagged drawn figures of Egon Schiele, and the vibrant colours of Matisse.

I like the tactile nature of working with fabric and the imperfect nature of using an old machine to create pieces. I started experimenting with machine embroidery whilst studying for my Art foundation at college. I was quite experimental with my sewing at college, I would sew onto lots of different types of material – plastic, paper, card and fabric. Calico became my paper.

- <https://www.sewsarahwalton.com/>







Kirsty Whitlock

Kirsty Whitlock uses an array of found materials to create her environmental and thought-provoking sculptures. **Found objects** such as newspapers and household items get transformed with embroidery thus creating pieces that **surprise and inspire**. Today's throw-away culture is the central preoccupation of the artist who tries to convey the message of social responsibility by weaving her complex mix media artworks.



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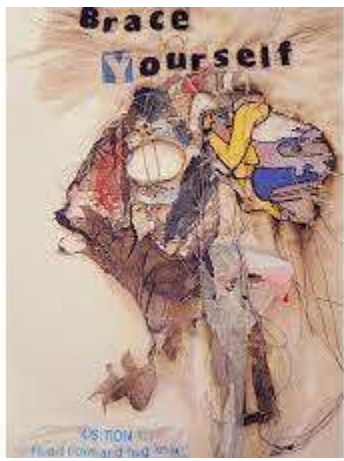
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Kiki Smith

Kiki Smith is a West German-born American artist whose work has addressed the themes of sex, birth and regeneration. Her figurative work of the late 1980s and early 1990s confronted subjects such as AIDS and gender, while recent works have depicted the human condition in relationship to nature.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LHQBzkjwx8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MlVXco6cVw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVKdSuNdk8g>



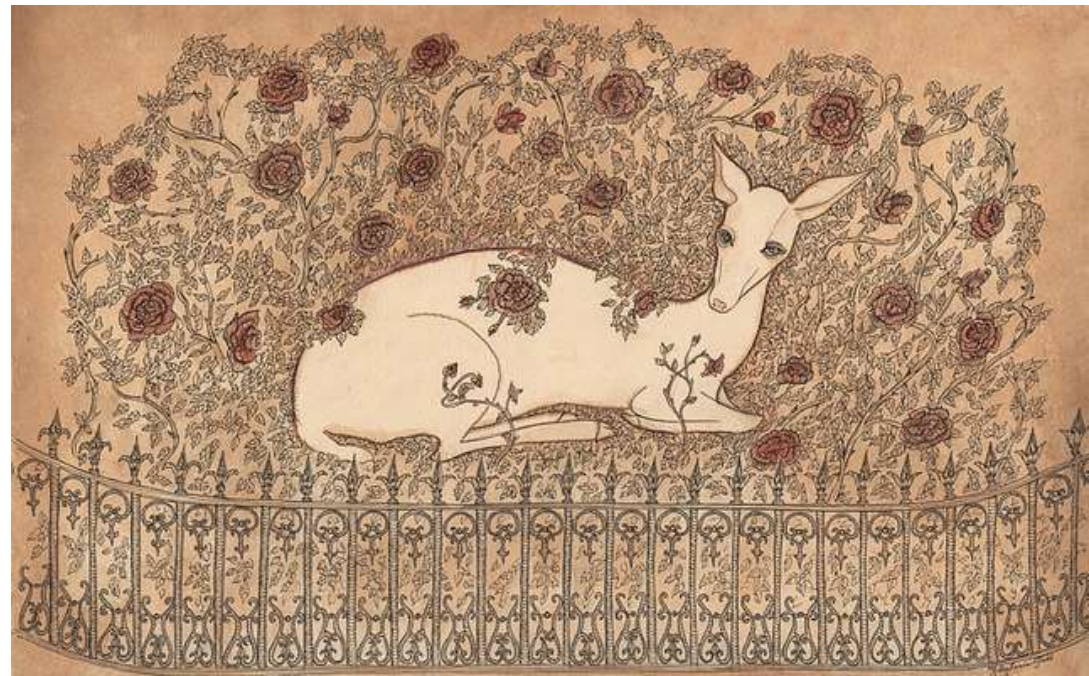












Assignment Suggestions...

- Incorporate mirrors or reflective surfaces in art.
- Stitch on a canvas or paper and incorporate the threads into the artwork.
- Create an artwork inspired by the patterns in one of the traditional embroidery artworks.