



The Inspired Needle: Embroidery Past & Present

A VIRTUAL WINTERTHUR CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 2–3, 2020

Embroidery is both a long-standing tradition and a contemporary craft. It reflects the intellectual endeavors, enlivens the political debates, and empowers the entrepreneurial pursuits of those who dare to pick up a needle. Inspiration abounds during this two-day celebration of needlework—and needleworkers—presented by Winterthur staff, visiting scholars, designers, and artists. Registration opens August 1, 2020. Join us!

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Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library

THE INSPIRED NEEDLE: EMBROIDERY PAST AND PRESENT

LECTURES ON DEMAND

Watch as many times as you wish during the month of October. Each lecture lasts approximately 45 minutes.
Downloading or recording of presentations is prohibited.

Patterns and Pieces: Whitework Samplers of the 17th Century

Tricia Wilson Nguyen, Owner, Thistle Threads, Arlington, MA

By the end of the 17th century, patterns for several forms of needlework had been published and distributed for more than a hundred years. These early pattern books were kept and used by multiple generations as well as reproduced in multiple editions and extensively plagiarized. Close study of the patterns and samplers of the last half of the 17th century can reveal many answers to the working of popular cut whitework techniques. From the frontispieces, pattern names, and subtle clues in the woodcuts, we can tell which patterns were realistic and gave instruction to the reader and which were opportunistic prints by less-knowledgeable artists and likely unable to be worked. We can start to group these samplers based on technique and pattern and discuss many conundrums that they hold.

Stitched Cabinets and Needlework Notebooks: The Embroideries of Mary, Queen of Scots, and Bess of Hardwick Reconsidered

Nicole LaBouff, Associate Curator of Textiles, Minneapolis Institute of Art, MN

The Oxburgh Hangings, a group of late 16th-century embroideries created by Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–1587), and the English countess, “Bess of Hardwick” (ca. 1527–1608), are often regarded as status-driven proclamations of rank and power. LaBouff argues instead that the embroiderers carefully selected their imagery—plants, animals, and English and Latin phrases—to support the women’s scholarly interests in natural history and foreign languages. While their male contemporaries built *wunderkammers* and compiled commonplace books—information management devices largely off limits to women—Bess and Mary found creative solutions in embroidered cabinets of curiosity and needlework notebooks.

Mary Linwood and the Business of Embroidery

Heidi Strobel, Professor of Art History, University of Evansville, IN

In 1809, embroiderer Mary Linwood (1755–1845) opened a gallery in London’s Leicester Square, a neighborhood known then and now for its popular entertainment. The first gallery to be run by a woman in London, it featured her full-size needlework copies of popular paintings after beloved British artists Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, and George Stubbs. Placing her work in specially altered rooms, she transformed spectators into active participants as they moved through a rich array of English art, Gothic settings, and other sentimental journeys. Linwood did not sell her textiles, but ticket sales from the gallery allowed her to amass a fortune. This self-fashioned businesswoman kept herself free from entanglements with print publishers and artists. She cleverly utilized the medium of embroidery, along with portraiture, advertising, and periodical articles, to create a public image of patriotic femininity perhaps at odds with what might have been perceived as a transgressive act—participating in the primarily masculine arena of the early 19th-century London art world. When she died, her estate was worth nearly \$5.5 million in today’s dollars.

Outside the Home: Reworking Femininity in Antebellum Needlework

Mariah Gruner, Doctoral Candidate in American Studies, Boston University, MA

In the early 19th century, decorative embroidery seemed to be neatly understood as a domestic art and intimately associated with femininity. By examining the rise of architectural detailing in schoolgirl samplers and exploring the importance of needlework in women’s participation in the abolitionist movement, however, we can come to see that these women were, in fact, pushing the boundaries of what was considered “domestic” and what was considered appropriately “feminine.” This presentation asks how we can use decorative needlework as a historical resource to help us see the changing dynamics of women’s lives and their fight for rights in the antebellum United States.

THE INSPIRED NEEDLE: EMBROIDERY PAST AND PRESENT

LECTURES ON DEMAND *CONTINUED*

The RSN Way: Teaching and Learning at the Royal School of Needlework Since 1872

Dr. Susan Kay-Williams, Chief Executive of the Royal School of Needlework, Hampton Court Palace, UK

The Royal School of Needlework has always taught in a particular way—with a reason. It enabled a group of people to work on a project and yet it should look like the work of one person. This remains true today, but behind this approach lays a range of courses, subjects, projects, and briefs leading to the three main courses today: the Certificate and Diploma in technical hand embroidery, the Future Tutor program, and the BA Hons degree in hand embroidery. Using a wealth of images, this session will show how the RSN has both kept tradition alive and moved with the times.

On “the capability of women to execute and plan”

Mary Schoeser, Hon. Senior Research Fellow, Victoria & Albert Museum, and President, Textile Society, UK

A quotation from Maud Hall’s *English Church Needlework* (1901), introduces a lecture that examines embroidery as empowerment. Taking as its starting point the growth of church building in the Victorian era, this talk illustrates the intertwined influences of enlarged congregations, newly formed convents, and the development of art needlework, all of which contributed to the gradual emergence of women whose self-confidence and social commitments were both expressed through stitching. Within the context of formal and informal art education for women, it highlights little-known masterpieces and reveals the links between this revolutionary movement and another: the woman’s suffrage movement.

Erica Wilson and the Business End of the Needle

Anne Hilker, Co-Curator of *Erica Wilson: A Life in Stitches*, and Ph.D. candidate, Bard Graduate Center, NY

Erica Wilson and her designs made embroidery exciting and accessible throughout the last half of the 20th century. Highlighting objects from the Fall 2020 Winterthur exhibition, *Erica Wilson: A Life in Stitches*, this talk examines Wilson’s inventive, and profitable, embrace of media, marketing, and materials. It looks back at her first works and catalogues; her Madison Avenue store; and at her television shows, books, and kits, marking her path from embroidery teacher to celebrity.

Making Work with a Personal Narrative

Emily Jo Gibbs, Artist

Over the last two decades, British artist Emily Jo Gibbs has established an international reputation for her delicate textiles. Alongside her commission-based art practice, Gibbs regularly teaches short courses and gives talks for a variety of clients including: The V&A, Art in Action, Embroiderers Guilds, Rochester Art Gallery, Oxfordshire Museum, and West Dean College. Her work has frequently appeared in national and international press and publications including: *Crafts, Elle, Embroidery, Marie Claire, Period Living, Tatler, Financial Times, The Telegraph, The Independent, and Vogue*. Here she discusses the origin and development of her recent Value of Making project and the idea that you can convey your admiration by taking the time to slowly describe someone in stitch.



THE INSPIRED NEEDLE: EMBROIDERY PAST AND PRESENT

LIVE CONVERSATIONS*

Conference presenters convene for a series of informal conversations about their personal and professional interests in needlework and why their work matters today. Questions from audience members are welcome! These conversations will be recorded and will be available through the month of October.

Friday, October 2, 1:00–1:45 pm

Needlework & Empowerment:

Heidi Strobel and Mariah Gruner

Friday, October 2, 2:00–2:45 pm

The Value of Making:

Mary Schoeser and Emily Jo Gibbs

Saturday, October 3, 1:00–1:45 pm

The Royal School of Needlework

and an Exceptional Alumna:

Anne Hilker and Susan Kay-Williams

Saturday, October 3, 2:00–2:45 pm

Very Early Needlework:

Tricia Wilson Nguyen and Nicole LaBouff

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE*

Come together as a community to celebrate our common interest.

Friday, October 2, 7:00–8:30 pm

Trivia: Exceptional Embroidery

Do you know the difference between a feather stitch and a flame stitch? Do you know the history of World Embroidery Day? If you like embroidery and trivia, then this event is for you! Gather friends from near or far (virtually, of course), and join Winterthur Textile Conservator Laura Mina for a few rounds of lighthearted competition exploring some fascinating and fun needlework nuggets. Register as an individual or as a team of up to five people.

To register, e-mail continuingeducation@winterthur.org by **September 30** with the name of your team and the e-mail addresses for each of your teammates. We will send more information about the logistics upon registration.

Saturday, October 3, 11:00–11:45 am

Embroidery Up-Close

Laura Mina, Associate Conservator of Textiles and Head of the Textile Lab, Winterthur

Katherine Sahmel, Conservator of Textiles, Winterthur

Venture behind-the-scenes with Winterthur textile conservators to get a sneak peek at the virtual exhibition, *Erica Wilson: A Life in Stitches*. Zoom in on details beyond what you can see in a gallery setting and learn how conservators care for pieces in the Winterthur collection.

Saturday, October 3, 3:00–3:45 pm

Needlework Showcase

Gain inspiration from your fellow embroiderers as we ooh and ah over a few examples together. We've chosen a few delightfully amazing embroidery projects featured on Instagram and asked their creators to share a bit about their process and inspiration.

Face Mask Fashion Show

Many people have made face masks to protect themselves and others during the pandemic. Some have added embellishments to make their masks fun, fabulous, and fashionable. We invite you to submit a photo of yourself modeling a facemask that showcases your needlework skills and creativity. Selected applicants will be featured in a virtual face mask fashion show during the needlework conference. **E-mail your photo to continuingeducation@winterthur.org by September 15.**

*Please note: all conversation and program times are Eastern Daylight Time.

Shop Winterthur's selection of needlework kits from your home at **WinterthurStore.com**.

For **FREE SHIPPING**, enter promo code **Needle10** at checkout. Offer expires November 1, 2020.

SHOP

THE INSPIRED NEEDLE: EMBROIDERY PAST AND PRESENT

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

Emily Jo Gibbs is a British Artist who over the last two decades has established an international reputation for her exquisite work. She is a member of Contemporary Applied Arts, The 62 Group of Textile Artists, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Emily creates hand-stitched textiles with a delicate graphic quality, observing the quiet beauty of the overlooked. Gently advocating The Value of Making, she creates work that celebrates the skill, dexterity, and the creative problem solving of people who make things.

Her work is in the collections of the V&A, The Crafts Council, and the Museum of Fine Art, Houston.

Mariah Gruner is a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at Boston University, studying how craft is gendered and gender is crafted. She is currently a Dissertation Fellow at the Boston University Center for the Humanities, where she is completing her dissertation, “Stitching Selfhood, Materializing Gender: The Political Uses of American Women’s Decorative Needlework, 1820-1920.” She also works as the program coordinator for the Boston University Public Humanities Undergraduate Fellowship Program and teaches courses on gender and material culture. Her work has been supported by the Decorative Arts Trust; the Consortium for Graduate Studies in Gender, Culture, Women, and Sexuality; and the American Craft Council. She looks forward to her time at Winterthur as a Research Fellow this academic year.

Anne Hilker is the co-author, with Linda Eaton, of *Erica Wilson: A Life in Stitches*, forthcoming from Winterthur Museum, and co-curator of the virtual exhibition of the same name. She will receive her Ph.D. degree from the Bard Graduate Center, New York City, next year. Anne has lectured on topics related to embroidery, kits, and Erica Wilson’s career. She learned crewelwork more than fifty years ago from Erica—through her kits.

Dr. Susan Kay-Williams is the Chief Executive of the Royal School of Needlework, based at Hampton Court Palace, a post she has held for 13 years. She is also the RSN’s curator and archivist and in her spare time is writing a history of the RSN to be published in time for its 150th anniversary in 2022. Simultaneously, she is preparing an exhibition about the role of embroidery in girls’ education, opening in September 2021 at the RSN’s headquarters and launching the anniversary year.

She is the author of *The Story of Colour in Textiles* which reflects her main research on the history of dyes. She lectures all over the world and is back at Winterthur by popular demand.

Nicole Labouff is Associate Curator of textiles at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. She received an M.A. in History of Dress from the Courtauld Institute of Art and a Ph.D. in History from the University of California, Irvine. Her research explores the intersection of art and science within the domestic practices of elite women in early modern England.

Laura Mina joined Winterthur as the Associate Conservator of Textiles and Head of Textile Lab in 2017. As Affiliated Assistant Professor with WUDPAC, Laura teaches the first year Textile Block and supervises second- and third-year textile majors in the Master’s program. Before joining Winterthur, Laura was the Associate Conservator with The Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Laura received an M.A. in Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, Museum Practice from the Fashion Institute of Technology with a specialization in conservation and a B.S. in Performance Studies from Northwestern University.

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ABOUT THE PRESENTERS *CONTINUED*

Dr. Tricia Wilson Nguyen is a teacher, historian, entrepreneur, and engineer. Her interests stretch between the embroidery and technology of the past and present. Dr. Nguyen's primary field is engineering, where she has been part of a small group of scientists and artists who have pioneered the new field of electronic textiles. Her product developments in that field have been seen in Land's End, Brookstone, the fields of World Cup Soccer and have been exhibited at the Smithsonian. But in this venue, Tricia is best known for her knowledge and interpretation of historical needlework through projects such as the Plimoth Jacket. She is owner of Thistle Threads, a company which researches and designs historically inspired needlework. Her unique twist is viewing the objects through the lens of economic history using her engineering background to understand the clues they hold. Her current research project concerns embroidered caskets, applying experimental archaeology practices to understand the genre. To do this, she is running a popular course call Cabinet of Curiosities, where over 600 stitchers are producing their own interpretation.

Mary Schoeser is a predominantly freelance historian who has written 26 books, including *Textiles: A Concise History*, *Silk*, and *Textiles: The Art of Mankind*, as well as more than 50 essays and over 120 shorter pieces. Through her work as the archivist for Warner & Sons, an English textile firm, she has extensive knowledge of manufacturers and understanding of textile and wallpaper production. This has facilitated restoration work with English Heritage, the National Trust, and other historic property owners and has also informed 36 curatorial projects, from the permanent Elizabeth Hoare Embroidery Gallery at Liverpool Cathedral to *Off the Wall: American Art to Wear* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, co-curated with Dilys Blum. Her extensive academic experience includes an Honorary Senior Research Fellowship from the Victoria & Albert Museum, where she focused on 19th-century silks in Spitalfields and the east of England. She is President of the Textile Society and Patron of the School of Textiles, Coggeshall.

Heidi A. Strobel is Professor of Art History at the department of Archaeology and Art History. She is Curator of the Peters-Margedant House and serves as Associate Dean of the William L. Ridgway College of Arts and Sciences. She is finishing her third book, *The Art of Mary Linwood: Embroidery, Installation, and the Popular Picturesque*, which will be published by Bloomsbury later this year. She is an active member of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. She was awarded a Council of Independent Colleges Art History Development Grant.