

**Threads:
a Paperwork's
Journal**

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My Recent Journey with Stitching by Mabel Dean

Several years ago, Barbara Snow shared some small postcard-size stitched pieces she was working on. I thought they were charming and wanted to try making one. Several days later she presented me with a sandwich baggie filled with small tidbits of cloth including some sheer pieces of chiffon. Soon afterwards I finished my first mini-quilt, “Desert Scape”. I was hooked.



What I liked about her approach was its spontaneity and simplicity. She encouraged me to use variations on straight-stitching, add beads or trinkets, and try “glazing” with sheer fabrics like chiffon, netting, and colored organzas.

I started collecting stitched work on Pinterest and discovered a whole world of interesting ways to use straight stitches to embellish fabric. I fell in love with boro, kantha, and sashiko styles of embroidery and I discovered textile artists Junko Oki and Jude Hill. I began subscribing to Jude Hill’s “Spirit Cloth” blog. She is well known as an online teacher. Last year she decided to make her online classes available free! What a gift! (She will accept donations but they are strictly voluntary!)



Her on-line demos are just what I needed for additional inspiration. "Beastie Girl" is my first finished project based on one of her free classes. I've learned so much about the design process from following her daily blog, and developed wonderful satisfying stitching and quilting techniques from taking her free classes.

There are many books available on stitching, quilting, fabric embellishment etc. Here are two I have recently acquired that I particularly enjoy:

Slow Stitch: Mindful and Contemplative Textile Art by Claire Wellesley-Smith. What I like about this book is its approach to stitching as a meditative practice. I love the process of embellishing a piece of cloth with thread without focus on an ultimate goal.

I like the ideas she shares about reusing cloth in new ways. This is a book that can provide endless stimulation, one page at a time. It is filled with a feast of photographs that are incredibly inspiring.

Drawn to Stitch: Line, Drawing and Mark-Making in Textile Art by Gwen Hedley. When you think about stitches as marks and approach cloth as a sketch or drawing, you open a whole new world of art making. This book is a visual candy store featuring an amazing array of ways to make marks on fabric. It complements the Wellesley-Smith book and includes a series of exercises to help develop your own creativity with fabric.

Jude Hill's website: www.spiritcloth.typepad.com

Book Review: Free-Form Embroidery:
Transforming Traditional Stitches into Fiber Art
by Deb Hilbert

Published in 2012, this tome brings the art of embroidery to new heights in the world of hand stitching. As a handcraft book, it contains the usual lists of supplies and tools needed for completing a hand-stitching project. Beginners may appreciate the sections about choosing fabric, threads, and yarns for different types of projects and framing options.

Where this book shines, though, is in the quality of its content. First, it demonstrates each of its 60 stitches with an easy-to-follow step-by-step process, while also showing a number of examples, in lovely watercolors, on how that stitch would look when sewn for a project. For many of the stitches, Montano also includes a photo of a stitched collage using the stitches she is teaching to the viewer.

In the section called Combining Stitches, the author shares techniques about choosing the best stitches for creating various things in nature. If you are interested in creating a project with a hand-stitched tree, you can check the section called Tree Types, and follow her guide to creating a beautiful aspen, birch, cypress, evergreen, juniper, and maple, among others. There are additional examples of how to stitch fabulous flowers, shrubs, and grasses, as well as underwater sea plants and corals.

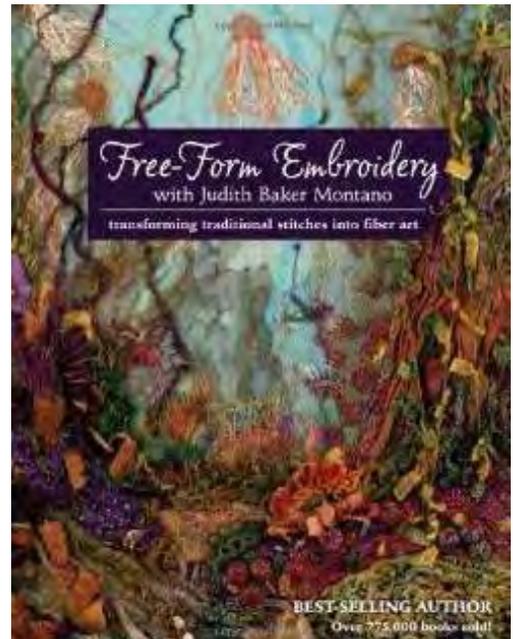
The last part of the book is called Think like a Painter, where Montano explains her painterly process of creating hand-stitched landscapes that are absolutely stunning. She shares her method, starting from a photo, and demonstrates how to choose backgrounds, materials, and stitches for the many rich layers of her scenic compositions.

This Canadian artist, who currently resides in Colorado, has found a way to awaken the dormant hand-stitching skills I learned as a child. (I also have to credit Jane LaFazio's Paperworks art quilt workshop last spring for that too!) This is the type of book that you'll want to cozy up to while drinking a nice cup of tea. I guarantee you will be inspired to pull out that DMC embroidery floss and start a new project today.



Do What You Love

Free-Form Embroidery: Transforming
Traditional Stitches into Fiber Art
by Judith Baker Montano
C & T Publishing
Copyright: 2012



Book Review: Exploring Dimension in Quilt Art By Connie Kampsula

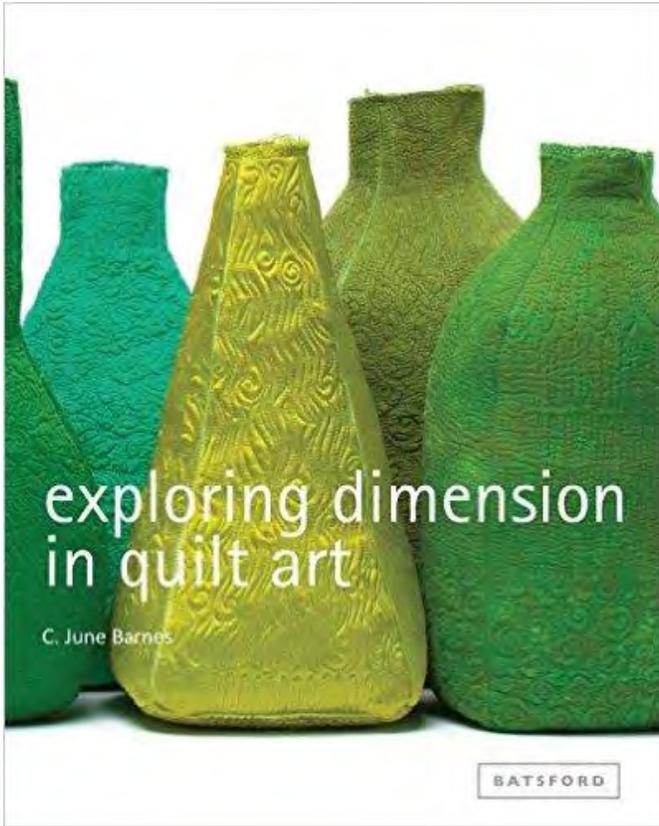
Exploring Dimension in Quilt Art by C. June Barnes is a fascinating guide to creating dimensional effects in quilt art. Several of the examples can be translated to paper and the book is easy to understand through its patterns, diagrams, and easy-to-follow instructions.

The use of texture, sewing, and fiber materials, along with techniques, offer inspiration for every level of artistic creation. The list of verb command prompts is a useful tool for developing ideas for your work.

Embellishment, presentation and the following techniques are shown through the work of a variety of artists:

- Surface manipulation of the plane-weaving strips, coiling, folding, gathering, and smocking
- Arranging the plane through stacking/layering, spirals, curling/wrapping, stretching/extending, and twisting
- Three-dimensional geometric shapes such as circles and squares
- Pieced constructions utilizing the geometry of crescents, pyramids, prisms, cylinders, and capsules

This is a beautiful, colorful book with an added glossary and recommended reading list. I have been totally inspired by the art in it.

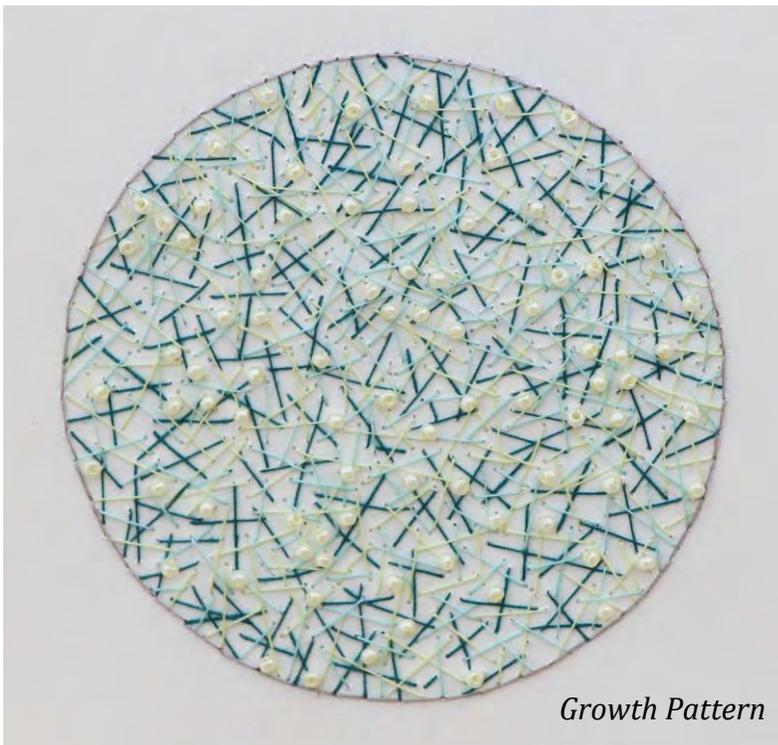


Exploring Dimension in Quilt Art
by C. June Barnes
Batsford Publishing
Copyright: 2015

Material Stitching

By Nora McGinnis

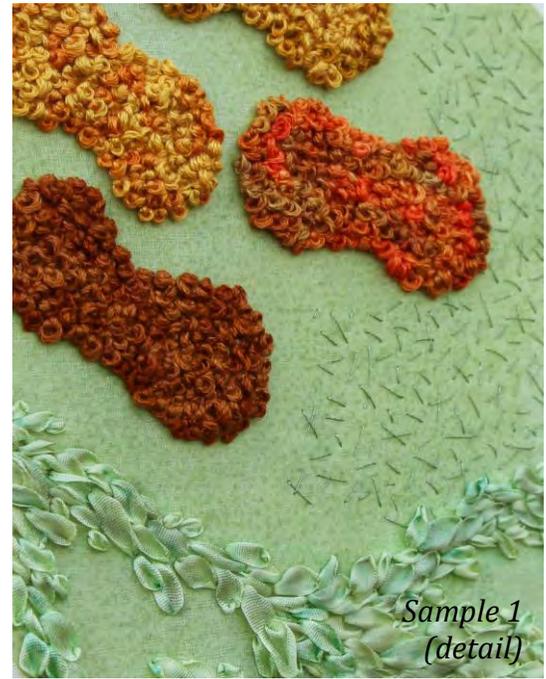
As I see it, paper and textiles lie along the same continuum. They can be made from the same substances; cotton being transformed into soft and flexible papers or sturdy and breathable fabrics; flax being converted into crisp linen yardage and refined linen paper; and wood pulp being processed into common papers and versatile rayon textiles. From there, they can also be remade into each other. Spinning strips of paper into paperyarn for knitting, crochet, and weaving is increasingly popular. Worn out textiles can be pulped and remade into new sheets of paper and recycled papers can be broken down and processed into new rayon fabrics. Even now, new technologies are developing that enmesh the two areas further.



There are also numerous techniques that can be applied to both materials. Printing and painting can be adapted to each, both can be dyed in various shades, and stitching is integral to creating form and design in each. Stitching creates the very spine from which books are made and holds the key to giving fabric body and structure. In addition

to having such an important utilitarian role, it is also an invaluable design tool that is able to transform a surface and enhance an object beyond the sum of its parts.

Stitching has been the basis of my own work for some time. The sciences were always a sideline interest for me, and something I kept an eye on while pursuing a degree in fiber arts. At one point during my studies, I began to see similarities between the biological patterns in the microorganisms I was reading about and the mechanical patterns inherent in the fibers media I was using.

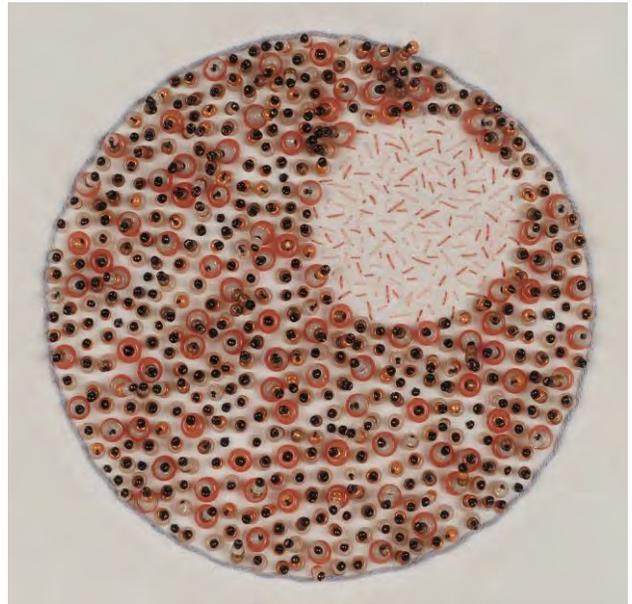


Beading closely parallels the way in which cells stack, cluster, and mass to form larger colonies and organisms, while ruffled fabric resembles fleshy membranes, and embroidery stitches correspond with diverse cell structures. Soon, my work was centered on these parallels and I was using stitching to illustrate views through microscopes, bacteria growth in petri dishes, and more.



Growth Pattern IV

Recently, I have expanded my stitching to new materials, including needle-felted wool and paper. These two substrates interact with the threads and beads I use differently than a woven fabric does.



*Growth Pattern IV
(detail)*



Amoeba IV

The felt is created by a process of matting loose wool fibers together, and results in a chaos structure that is more closely related to papermaking than the gridded structure of weaving. Because of this, and the three dimensional possibilities the technique affords, I can

create more organic backgrounds for my embellishments. These evoke a more natural field environment, in contrast to the clinical lab environment much of my older work references. On the other end of the spectrum, paper provides yet another interaction. I started using it as a base to quickly experiment with thread color combinations, but found that I liked the aesthetic in and of itself. Because the paper lies completely flat and does not have the same give as layered fabric, the threads and beads sit slightly above it rather than easing down to the same level. This creates a more abstract representation of the cells and organelles I am illustrating, and the simplicity is a refreshing resting place within the realm of my work.



Amoeba I

Overall, I am quite happy with the direction of my experiments and have continued exploring paper and its possibilities. It fits naturally into my practice and certainly has much more to offer in the future.



Growth Pattern II (detail)

Repose

By Carol Morgan

I come from a family of talented quilters and tailors. My grandmother hand-stitched the quilt on our bed. My mother loved to have stitching projects at her side. Most evenings, she disappeared to the basement where she would sew into the night. I frequently fell asleep to the hum of the sewing machine.

On the other hand, I do not know how to stitch or operate a sewing machine. But I would like to be creative with fibers and cloth. So I am a “want to be”.

Recently, Jane LaFazio taught a class on hand-stitching. It was a risk to attend as I am below the basic level. At first, she helped me thread the needle. Then she prompted us to identify an intention or topic, write it on cloth, and incorporate that cloth and stitching into a

design. It was magic! Each little square became a unique part of a larger piece. At the end of the class, the samplers were sweet, colorful, inventive and lovely. I loved hand-stitching!



What I loved most about the hand-stitching class was the process. Women sat in circles, their attention focused on their hands and the fabric. Cloth remnants cluttered tables. Members talked

quietly. Every now and then a group erupted in laughter. It was an atmosphere of support, relaxation and wonder.

Hand-stitching is sometimes referred to as slow-cloth. It starts with choosing several fabrics, selecting pretty threads and imagining free-form designs.

Of interest are the cloth textures and the needle size and colored threads. When I am alone, sewing forms a meditative connection between my mind, figures, and breath. It is concentrating on one stitch at a time, one breath at a time, slowing the mind, resting in the moment. There is nothing to do but stitch.

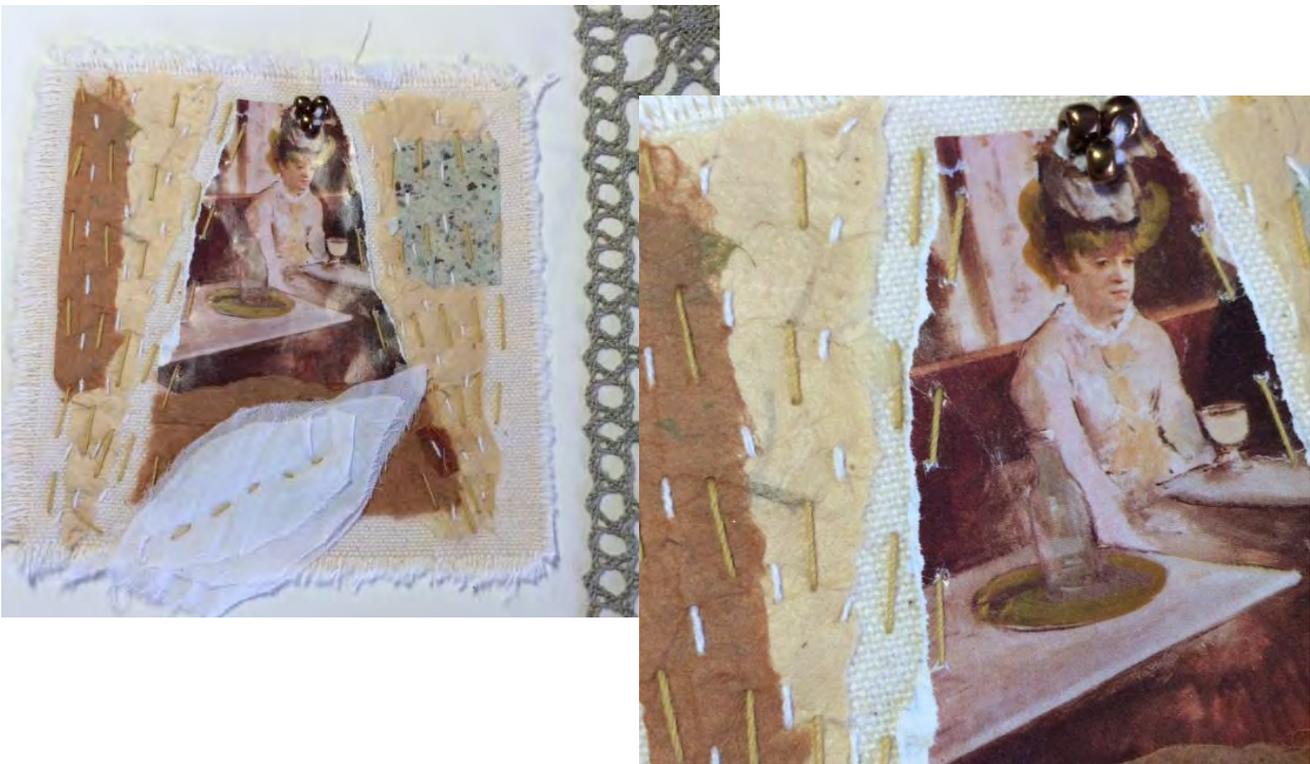
Our hand-stitching Creative Circle meets monthly. Members bring their projects, reference books, and good humor. We are excited to see new works, which many times result in spontaneous tutorials. There is the quiet hum of voices and laughter; the silence of needles stitching, friendship, and accepting one moment at a time as a respite from our busy lives.



Stitching Holds It Together

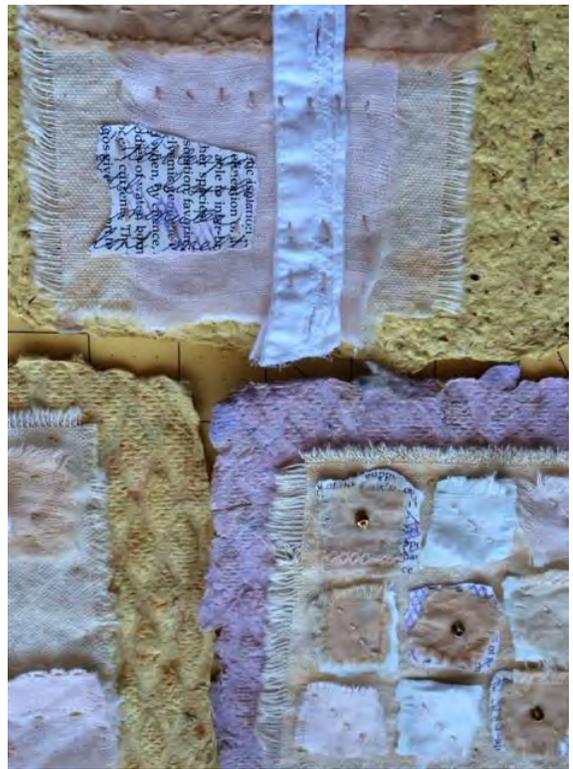
By Gerry Murano

Recycling materials that have already had another life is what is compelling to me. Lately, I've settled into stitching into paper and cloth that I already have in some form: colorful junk mail blended and formed into pages, thrift store clothing with interesting detail that I've tea-dyed and ripped into strips and squares, and my old journal writings, overwritten onto book pages.



My favorite thread is pearl cotton. The threads and large stitches are definitely part of the appeal. The process of working small feels simple and meditative.

Thanks to Diana Davis for the canvas squares that got me started, and to Mabel Dean for the inspirational *Slow Stitch: Mindful and Contemplative Textile Art* book recommendation and to her introduction to Jude Hill and her daily blog, Spirit Cloth.



Hanging By a Thread

By Roxanne Rossi

I recently developed an exhibit for the Lakewood Cultural Center in Denver, Colorado. This exhibit was a development of a new body of work. What I did know at the beginning was I wanted to use cast paper and machine sewn lines, as I had become more proficient at adhering sewn lines to wet paper on a larger surface.

As “hanging by a thread” can be risky and unpredictable, feeling somewhat precarious and most unsettled, so does the start of new work until the time it becomes a cohesive concept. For me, this connection to threads became the sequence of time, the continuous thread of thought, thin yet strong, connecting the work together; the threads of mental thought to material imagery and a visual language. This body of work became a combination of imagery and abstract motif. Using the cast handmade papers white expanse, I felt the sewn lines create a dynamic interplay with the delicate and intricate textures. I hoped that up close, the imagery would create an intimacy with the viewer.



Returning to my inspiration of “hanging by a thread”, I suspended the work by threads. I also included large paper vessels that had inclusions of thread, and string. In the abstract work, the thread reappears as larger paper lines that are also suspended by thread in Plexiglas boxes. This work included other handmade papers and colored pulp.



As with many artists, I find that what appears in new work is the reflection of life. The imagery repeated a girl falling... in a just “letting go” way. There are times in our lives where it seems nothing can go right. I felt this was a boundless way for me to deal with the extreme chaos that was happening, I could, each time, find myself gently, softly falling back to solid ground.



Girl Falling

Resources

Indygo Junction's Needle Felting:
22 Stylish Projects for Home and Fashion
Amy Barickman

Felt with Love: Felt Hearts Flowers and Much More
Madeleine Millington

Felt Fabric Designs: A Recipe Book for Textile Artists
Sheila Smith

Hand Stitched Felt
Kata Golda

Sewing on Paper
Catherine Matthews Scanlon

Paper Quilting
Bridget Hoff

Free-form Embroidery with Judith Baker Montano: Transforming
Traditional Stitches into Fiber Art
Judith Baker Montano

Slow Stitch: Mindful & Contemplative Textile Art
Claire Wellesley Smith

Drawn to Stitch: Line, Drawing and Mark Making in Textile Art
Gwen Hedley

Stitch Stories: Personal Places, Spaces and Traces in Textile Art
Cas Holmes

Thank you to the contributors

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