Emotional repair and stitched folk art

“I love to honour and repurpose old textiles using hand and machine embroidery, vintage thread and string to add texture and character. My work has been described as ‘small worlds’, trapping and preserving pieces of embroidery and objects within it. I use a ‘netting-like’ machine embroidery stitch over the whole surface of the work. I further embellish my work with hand stitching and couching, using a variety of media.

This challenge is based on themes of folk art and Pennsylvania Dutch ‘fraktur’, taken from my third book ‘Textile Folk Art’ which was published in 2018.

You’ll be making an ‘emotionally repairing’ folk art flower-inspired mixed media collage, using treasured and forgotten elements from your ‘stash’. These might include fragments of new and old textiles, embroidery samples, printed fabric, ribbon, lace and buttons. Simple and slow hand stitching will be an important part of this project. This piece will become a ‘sampler’ you can enjoy returning to.”
TextileArtist.org community stitch challenge
Week six: Anne Kelly workbook

What you’ll need

Before you begin, think about the colours you would like to use and how they might fit together – choose your favourites! You might want to refer to any books you have on plants, flowers, embroidery or folk art. Then collect together these items:

- A piece of natural fibre background fabric in A4 size (approximately 22 x 28 cm). This can be cotton or linen, perhaps a piece of an old tea towel or a vintage/new textile in a neutral colour. If the background fabric is thin, back it with a strong piece fabric for extra support.
- Samples of floral embroidery (such as old tablecloths) that you are happy to cut up.
- Floral printed fabric with flowers and leaves that you can cut out.
- A 15 x 15 cm piece of fabric (plain or patterned), to make a vase or pot shape.
- Ric rac trim, bias binding or narrow ribbon to use for the stems.
- Some block-printed or rubber-stamped flowers on fabric (optional)
- Fabric marker pens or permanent coloured markers (optional)
- Buttons (optional)
- Glue stick
- Fabric scissors (small) for cutting out fine details
- Neutral thread
- Coloured embroidery threads
- Sewing needles

The challenge

- Begin by carefully cutting out your flower parts and leaf pieces close to the edge, leaving only a small border. Small scissors are good for this kind of detailed cutting.
• Using the piece of 15 x 15 cm fabric, make a vase or flower pot shape to hold your folk art flowers in. If you wish, make a paper template of your vase or pot and then pin it to your fabric and cut around it.

• To add extra colour to a printed floral element, use your fabric/permanent markers lightly on the pieces that you have cut out.

• Arrange your cut out flower parts and leaves at different heights in a semi-circular pattern above the vase or pot on your background.

• Lightly glue your main elements down.

• Using ribbons or couched string or embroidery thread, add some stems and leaves. Tack the pieces down onto the background, using small stab stitches.

• Now add some embellishments:
  o Use machine and/or hand stitching to create outlines and bring out details
  o Ribbons can be added to frame elements or to add further decoration
  o Try adding buttons or French knots to create stamens and floral centres
  o Couch some threads to add further tendrils or stems

• Complete your piece using kantha, boro/sashiko or seeding stitchwork. These are great options for ‘background’ stitching the empty space areas in your piece.

• You might want to continue to embellish the primary elements further.

• You could back your piece with wadding, or frame it within a larger piece.
Learn more about background stitching

**Boro/sashiko**


**Kantha**


https://indigowares.com/what-is-kantha-stitching/

https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/kantha-a-south-asian-quilting-tradition

**Stitches for Texture and Pattern, including seeding stitches**

https://www.textileartist.org/creating-texture-pattern-line-stitch

Examples of Anne’s work


Romanian commission: collaged vintage and printed fabrics, buttons, hand and net-texture machine-stitch.
Notes
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