

Stitching Emotions

Mary Linwood left no written record about how she felt about embroidery, although she must have enjoyed it to spend her life on it. Ruth Singer invited women who stitch today to share some of their feelings and emotions when stitching or reflecting on stitchers of the past.

Made by:

AmyLovesToSew, Ann Stephens, Anne Menary, Cynthia Wood,
Debbie Rosser, Denise Hagan, Eva Cantin, Hannah Moore, Jane Booth, Jane Charles,
Jo L, Jo Livingston, Joanna Wilde, Joanne Kaye, Julie Gibb, Kate Youens, Kay Steven,
Liz Ruth, Lynn Hebblethwaite, Michelle Webster, Monica Hamakami, Morag Bixley,
Pamela Hardy, Ruth Duffy, Sara Smith, Soraya Smithson, Sue Condie-Gardner,
Susan Green, Susan O. Fennel, Vicky Bilton, Victoria Oulton.

2025

Stitching Emotions

A textile book exploring how we feel when we stitch, for the Mary Linwood exhibition. Mary Linwood left no written record about how she felt about embroidery, although she must have enjoyed it to spend her life on it. Ruth Singer invited women who stitch today to share some of their feelings and emotions when stitching or reflecting on stitchers of the past.

The fabric book is a new work presented as part of Mary Linwood: Art, Stitch and Life. Makers were asked to respond to a brief, set as part of the Mary Linwood project engagement.

Use these cards for captions and details of each artwork and the makers that contributed to Stitching Emotions.



TOP LEFT

Denise Hagan, Eva Cantin, Julie Gibb, Kate Youens, Liz Ruth
A collaboration by six of Ruth's Maker Membership group. This patchwork of pieces used circles of words to reflect their feelings about stitching and what it brings them.

TOP RIGHT

Lynne Hebblethwaite
This piece has evolved as I progressed. The word came first, then the water. I feel submerged whilst working on a project.

BOTTOM LEFT

Anne Menary
I have seen Mary Linwood's embroideries and am interested in the painterly effects of thread painting. Using old stranded thread, split stitch and collage I explored my version of this technique.



TOP LEFT

Joanne Kaye

When I sew I feel connected. Connected to the process of making the intangible become tangible; visually representing a liminal space or threshold where thoughts become stitch.

TOP RIGHT

Vicky Bilton

When I stitch, I need to focus, so I feel that it acts as a form of meditation, allowing me to escape from the chaos of everyday life.

BOTTOM RIGHT

Liz Ruth

Emotions whilst embroidering – Happy written in Gujarati. Thoughtful expressed with green running stitch and Calm illustrated with blue running stitched circles. Threads are naturally dyed wool. Inspired by Gujarat.



TOP LEFT

AmyLovesToSew

I wouldn't class embroidery as a relaxing pastime; my neck aches, my eyes strain, I stay up way too late. But its versatility fulfils my need to create.

TOP RIGHT

Eva Cantin

Results of a multiple-choice survey of local women stitchers, shown in three formats. Each stitch represents a response, each block represents a question. More information: stickyfingerstuff.blogspot.com

BOTTOM LEFT

Kay Steven

Simple stitching carries difficult, invisible and stifled emotions and thoughts through the cloth transforming them into powerful words, actions and deep magic.

BOTTOM RIGHT

Hannah Moore

When sewing, I feel connected to my late Mum and all the other women who have influenced me through sharing their skills and knowledge, or just donating tools and materials.



LEFT

Susan Green

I find the vibrancy of blended, layered threads coupled with the textural qualities of handstitch forms a unique outcome – that's when 'stitch' becomes a unique 'persona' and partnership.

TOP RIGHT

Joanne Kaye

When I sew I often feel restricted. Restricted by time, creative direction, or confidence. Stitching is regularly punctuated by these restrictions, represented by black French knots.

LOWER RIGHT

Denise Hagan

Banish the 'shoulds': Leaning into what I feel comfortable doing. No 'shoulds', just comfort and peace, using beautiful fabrics and threads with meaning and joy.



TOP LEFT

Ann Stephens

This piece is made up from vintage fabrics from France. My motto is 'Stitch by Stitch' – meditative stitches, to think thoughts one by one in time.

TOP RIGHT

Jane Charles

Vintage embroidery with English paper piecing patchwork reminds me of my grandmothers' craft work and lives. I inherited both of their sewing boxes. Eco printing of my grandfather, they all loved their gardens. I often think of them when I am hand stitching and creating new work.

BOTTOM RIGHT

Jane Booth

There is a gravestone in St. Margaret's Church, Leicester, for Agnes Barbour, 1444. It is mostly women who stitch and embroider; particularly in the domestic sphere. Embroidery connects women across time.



TOP LEFT

Jo L

Stitching connects me to my personal heritage. Kantha and fabric weaving reminds me of my much loved grandmother, memories that soothe and comfort, maternal love and a safe sanctuary.

TOP RIGHT

Liz Ruth

This piece has been inspired by an amazing trip to Gujarat and incorporates the words of the emotions I feel whilst embroidering. Happy, Thoughtful and Calm written in Gujarati.

BOTTOM LEFT

Susan Fennell

In engaging with these pieces, I found myself emotionally in an imaginary "landscape", wandering and exploring with a needle, thread, texture and colour. It felt like a needed place to shelter.



TOP

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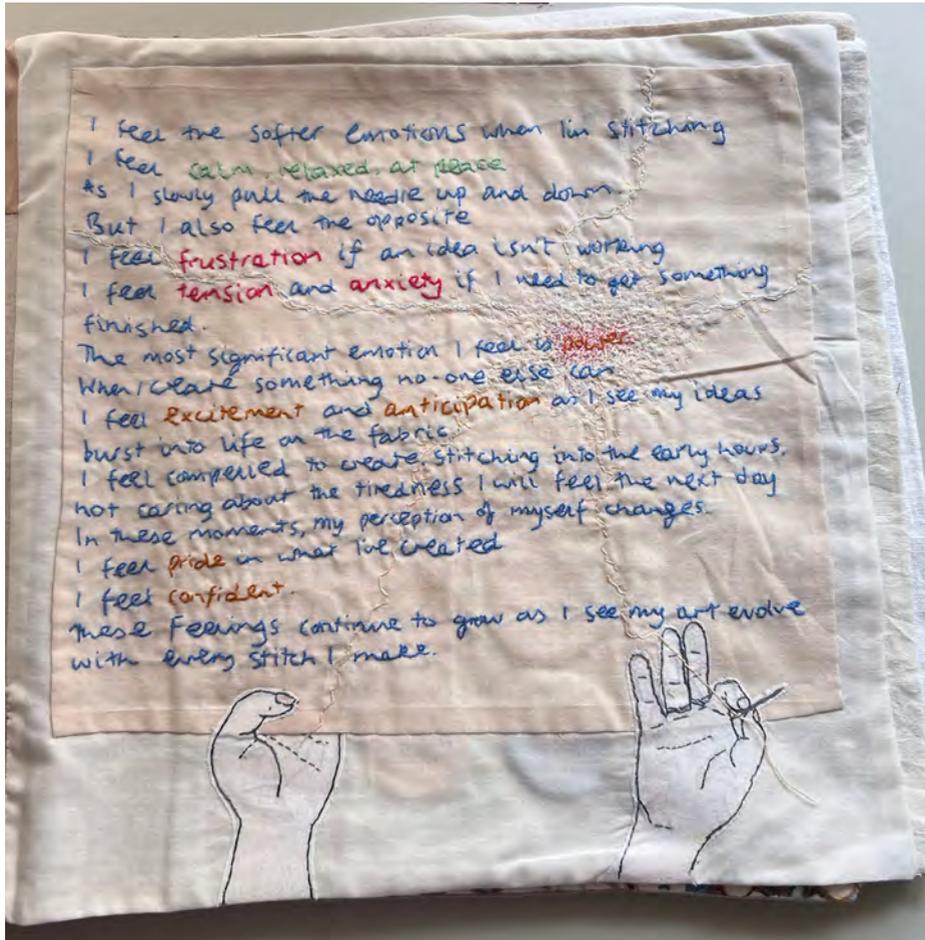
Cynthia Wood

My word is resonance.

Latin origin meaning: echo.

Like a thought/sound coming from the past
and still relevant in the future.

A stitch that binds and holds together
two women working across time.



I feel the softer emotions when I'm stitching

I feel calm, relaxed, at peace

As I slowly pull the needle up and down.

But I also feel the opposite

I feel **frustration** if an idea isn't working

I feel **tension** and **anxiety** if I need to get something finished.

The most significant emotion I feel is **power**

When I create something no-one else can

I feel **excitement** and **anticipation** as I see my ideas

burst into life on the fabric.

I feel compelled to create, stitching into the early hours,

not caring about the tiredness I will feel the next day

In these moments, my perception of myself changes.

I feel **pride** in what I've created

I feel **confident**.

These feelings continue to grow as I see my art evolve

with every stitch I make.

Julie Gibb

Embroidery is often seen as a passive activity. I wanted to record the feeling of empowerment that I – and past, present and future generations of women – experience when stitching.



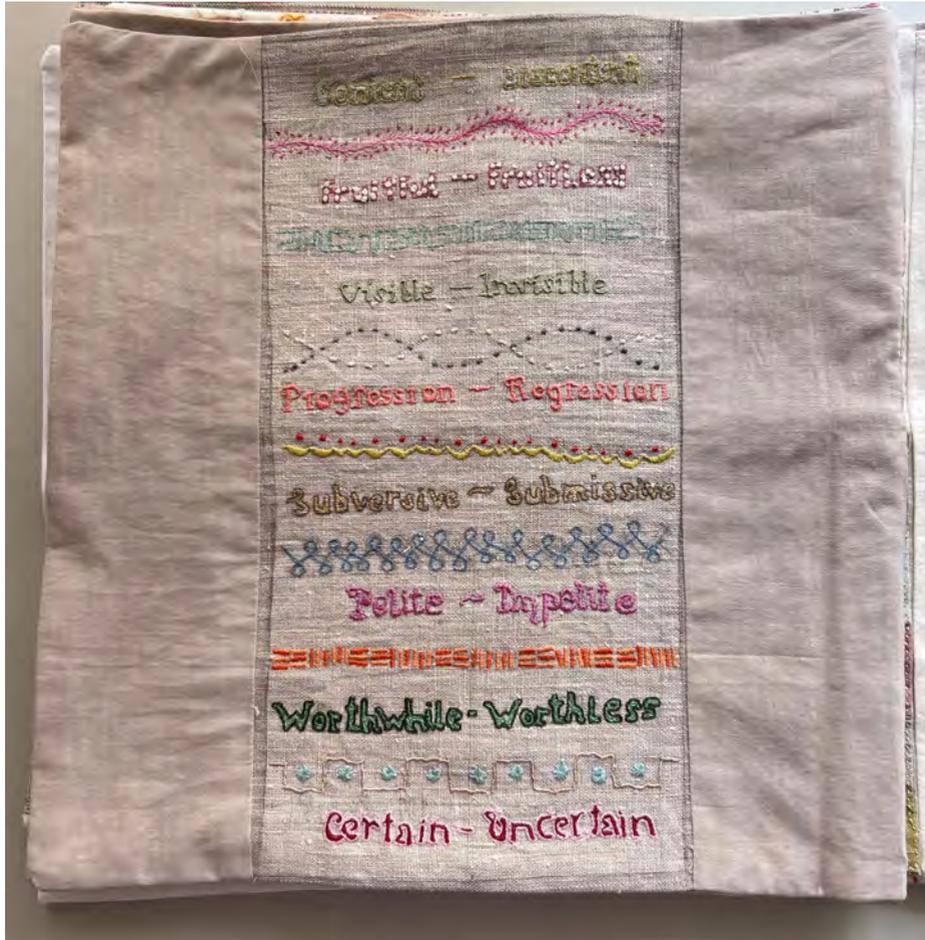
Morag Bixley

Sewing is my productive happy place. I feel calm (blue), creative and curious (yellow), at one with my mum and nana (suffragette colours) and all women who sew. It is the place where I learnt to persevere (red).



Joanna Wilde

'Interior Landscape' – Drawn from microscopic images of the clear cell cancer inside me, fractures with touch texture of scar tissue. Embroidering moves fear, pain and grief through haptic repetition.



Soraya Smithson

Sewing is often undervalued as 'women's work', making it subservient. My Mixed Emotions Sampler expresses my relationship with sewing, using thread and fabric as creative resistance.



Monica Hamakami

"Resilience" – Stitches became a therapy to release anxiety. The abstract running stitches represent my feelings: delicate and detailed, repetitive compulsive behaviour which it becomes a piece of art.



LEFT

Victoria Oulton

Feelings of nostalgia resonate as the silent repeated motion connects us across time and place. Memories of my Grandmother's embroidered hankies and my Mother's quiltmaking come together in this piece.

RIGHT

Michelle Webster

I sew daily. My sampler developed organically from a spiral of words that I generated as I stitched. Purposeful – absorbed – peaceful – timeless – calm – steady – cheerful – light-hearted.



TOP LEFT

Sue Condie-Gardner

Stitched on translucent layers echoing the passing of time and the seasons changing. Remembering Grandma through her hydrangea which has been passed down through cuttings, flourishing still in gardens across the country.

BOTTOM LEFT

Ruth Duffy

Discussing stitching in a group revealed how emotions such as calmness, thoughtfulness, and being challenged undulate and weave together. Where, why and what is being stitched to create emotional reactions.

BOTTOM RIGHT

Jo Livingston

Me and My Maternal Antecedents. Stitching calms me, gives me satisfaction, and helps me feel connected to my female ancestors as I use skills they would also have possessed.



TOP

Sara Smith

Nanna's scissors and the happy memories of learning to sew with her. The back resonates in a more meaningful way to me – asemic writing – abstract words which convey the love.

BOTTOM LEFT

Pamela Hardy

Using the emotion love, I have chosen to depict some favourite things. Chain, satin, back and stem stitches were used. I have been totally immersed in this Biro Remedy (anagram of Embroidery) experience.

BOTTOM RIGHT

Debbie Rosser

Vintage cloth stitched onto backing fabric and dipped in walnut ink, hand stitched in specified colours.