



EMBROIDERER'S AND QUILTER'S SOURCEBOOK

ANGELA THOMPSON



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First published 2005

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INTRODUCTION

This comprehensive book is intended as a reference source for both the recreational embroiderer and the textile student. At the same time, it is hoped that the wealth of illustrations will inspire embroiderers and quilters to try out new ideas and adapt designs and patterns from the past for their own particular type of craft work.

The development of the historic embroideries illustrated, which can be traced throughout the centuries, ends with their interpretation in the modern idiom and many of our contemporary textile artists have contributed examples of their work. Embroidery techniques of European origin are contrasted with those from other countries and the widely differing world regions. It is hoped that this will inspire the leisure embroiderer and quilter to visit other lands, meet like-minded people and share their stitchery expertise. It is also designed for textile students, to give an illustrated background to the history of embroidery from all over the world.

The greater part of the book is based on the collection of worldwide textiles, gathered together by the author over a period of many years. Victorian embroidery, lace, patchwork, baby-gowns and items of family costume were inherited from a grandmother who never threw anything away. It was this love of embroidery that led to the preservation of embroidery and patchwork made by the author's great grandmother, Matilda Adelaide Bate, as well as that of great, great aunt Jane Bate, an apprentice to a Court Dressmaker who worked for Queen Victoria. These family items became the basis of a collection devoted to different types of stitchery and textile techniques.

The search for new examples led to foreign travel, which in its turn provided an understanding of the methods used by the different craft workers and more importantly, the context in which the textiles are produced. No collection is complete, so the contemporary craft work illustrated in this book, which is not part of the collection, is credited with the name of the individual designer who produced the embroidered or quilted article. Museum collection items are listed under the appropriate headings.

The techniques featured in this guide appear in alphabetical order. Each section is designed to show the development of a particular subject, both through time and across the geographical areas of the world. Dates, which are approximate unless stated otherwise, give a sequence where patterns or methods of working change and develop over a period of time. The individual interpretation of similar stitching techniques used in widely differing communities can be compared, one with another. Some pieces, especially in contemporary work, include a variety of techniques, so these items are catalogued according to the main technique employed. Embroidery stitches are listed in the order of their frequency on each piece, not in their alphabetical order. A guide to the stitches used throughout is available under headings within the Index, which will also give details of the design elements included on the textiles.

Throughout, the measurement of each item illustrated has been included. While this is of great importance to the textile historian, it will also give a sense of scale to the working embroiderer and quilter. The size given is that of the complete item, unless specified otherwise. If the collected item is a fragment of a larger piece, the size of the fragment is given. As the scale of the embroidery shown in the detail illustrations changes, the measurement stated is the exact size of the particular section of the textile shown. In some cases the actual size will be smaller than the illustration, in others, much larger. The measurement of some Museum Collection items is approximate, and should be employed only as a guide.

It is hoped that the embroiderer or quilter who uses this book will gain as much pleasure as the author has in sharing her collection with them.

Angela Thompson, 2005



Chapter One

Appliqué

Hand Appliqué



left Stiffened fabric motifs, showing flowers and leaves, are cut out and applied to a background fabric of Ramie or China grass. Blanket stitch in a fine thread outlines the floral motifs which are reminiscent of the patterns painted onto china and pottery in the 1920s. The veins of the leaves are worked in stem stitch using a contrasting green embroidery thread.

Diameter 200mm (8in)
Philippines or the Far East, c. 1920–1930



above This slightly transparent, pina cloth tea cosy is made from pineapple leaf fibres. Three hollyhock flowers are worked in blind appliqué, where the raw edges of the coloured fabric are turned under by the needle and sewn in place as the work progresses. Satin, stem and chain stitches form the stalks and leaves, while French knots fill the flower centres.

320 x 250mm (12½ x 9in)

Philippines or the Far East, c. 1920–1930

right Applied felts and beadwork decorate this charming scene of a Zulu child outside a Kraal circular hut, together with a man drinking from a gourd. A similar combination of hand-stitched felts, string and applied beads, is found on dolls and craft work from the Red Cross Rehabilitation Centre, Durban – a charitable institution.

220–150 x 220mm (8½–6 x 8½in)

South Africa, 1950s





above This padded tea cosy, decorated with applied fabrics and hand embroidery stitches, represents a market stall with a woman selling flowers and vegetables to the children. A design typical of the early 1950s, featuring figures in felt appliqué in a whimsical interpretation of Victorian costume.

330 x 220mm (13 x 8½in)
England, c. 1950–1955



above Rilly work is the name given to this type of applied and quilted patchwork, often used for bed covers and mats. Squares of seamed triangles alternate with squares of leaf and flower patterns. The cut fabric edges are turned under and hemmed as the work is in progress. The finished patchwork is quilted to a background fabric using coarse running stitches in a darker, contrasting thread.

670 x 840mm (26½ x 33in)

Sind, Pakistan, c. 1970