

## **APPROVAL OF HONORS PROGRAM SENIOR PROJECT**

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### **Project Title**

*The Art of Slow: Why The Time and Effort Put into Handcrafted Objects Makes Them More Valuable Than Ever*

**This Senior Project is approved as acceptable**

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The Art of Slow: Why The Time and Effort Put into Handcrafted Objects Makes  
Them More Valuable Than Ever

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HON 401 1H - Honors Thesis

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### **Abstract**

The fast-paced environment of modern times has impacted the availability of activities that were once commonplace but are now rarely seen. For example, handicrafts are a slow process that requires time and consistency for an individual to be able to perform them. However, recent studies have shown that handicrafts offer multiple health benefits and suggest that practicing embroidery has a lot of advantages. Many college students may find this activity beneficial as a hobby or interest that allows them to be productive in a very fast-paced environment. This study exploration of the process of slow handicrafts in the digital age and learn about their specific health benefits.

## **Introduction**

In today's society, technology and machinery has become the most used tool, and almost every aspect of our lives is somehow connected to them. From manufacturing to communication, people rely heavily on machines and electronic devices. However, despite the undeniable benefits of technology, there is still something unique about handcrafted goods that makes them special to us. This is because there is a certain charm and warmth to handmade goods that simply cannot be replicated by machines. Perhaps it is the process that makes it so valuable by taking each step with patience or the beautiful results that come afterward. In a world that is becoming increasingly fast-paced and digital, taking the time to slow down and create something with our hands can be a powerful and rewarding experience. Therefore, this honors thesis is a personal exploration of the value and significance of handcrafted goods in today's society and states the ways handcrafts provide mental health benefits.

## **Purpose Statement**

This research project explores the value of handicrafts and the potential benefits of embroidery for mental health. With the guidance of professional embroidery teachers Ms. Gail Stafford and Ms. Pamela Reading, I learned about different methods and techniques and created different pieces of embroidery as a result. This provided me with a hands-on understanding of the craft and allowed me to explore the creative and artistic possibilities of embroidery. Therefore, I investigated the methods and significance of embroidery. As a southern East Asian myself, I am particularly interested in the role of embroidery in my cultural heritage and examined how different techniques and styles are with other handicrafts methods.

As a college student, I am familiar with the pressures and stresses of daily life, and I was curious to explore how embroidery might offer a therapeutic or meditative practice to support my

own mental health and well-being. By reflecting on my own experience of embroidery and the broader cultural and social significance of the craft, I considered why embroidery should continue to be practiced and valued in modern society. This included an exploration of the relationship between handicrafts and technology.

Overall, this research project aimed to deepen my understanding of embroidery as a craft and investigated its potential value for mental health and well-being. Through this exploration and experience, I confirmed the art of slow handcraft that opposes the fast-paced environment of technology.

### **Exploration of Embroidery Types**

To learn more about the different types of embroidery, I searched online resources found on the internet and books on embroidery from my instructors. I choose these resources because are readily available to anyone interested in embroidery. Below are a summary of my findings.

#### **Embroidery**

Embroidery is known for beautifully decorating fabrics with precise and high-quality designs(Bags of Love,n.d.). Embroidery is a handicraft that has been practiced for centuries, and while the methods of stitching and the materials used have evolved, the art form remains a valuable form of self-expression and creativity. In this exploration, I examined the different techniques of embroidery, with a specific focus on the relationship between technology and traditional handicrafts. Specifically, I explored how the methods of embroidery have changed with technological advancements and whether traditional embroidery methods still hold value in today's society.

As an artist myself, I have always been fascinated by the intricate and beautiful designs that can be created with a simple needle and thread. While there are numerous methods of

embroidery, including canvas work and Japanese embroidery, each requires different techniques and materials. In addition, crochet stands out as a distinct form of handicraft that involves the use of yarn and a hook. However, in a world where technology has permeated nearly every aspect of our lives, it is worth exploring whether traditional methods of embroidery still hold relevance and what benefits they offer in a world that is often focused on efficiency and speed.

The process of Embroidery takes a lot of time, especially for a beginner, but the results are always fascinating. There are various tips in this process:

1. Track the progress - it is often wise to mark the pattern when stitching. It is preferable to shade with a pencil the area or row or column. In this way, if mistakes happen it will be easy to track and go back and fix it (Lufholm, 2016).
2. Learn from an expert - having the opportunity to learn from an expert is very helpful (Lufholm, 2016).
3. Transferring a pattern - if the pattern requires transferring the outline of the pattern to the fabric, the type of fabric matters completely. Therefore, choosing carefully and always testing the fabric is a great idea (Lufholm, 2016).

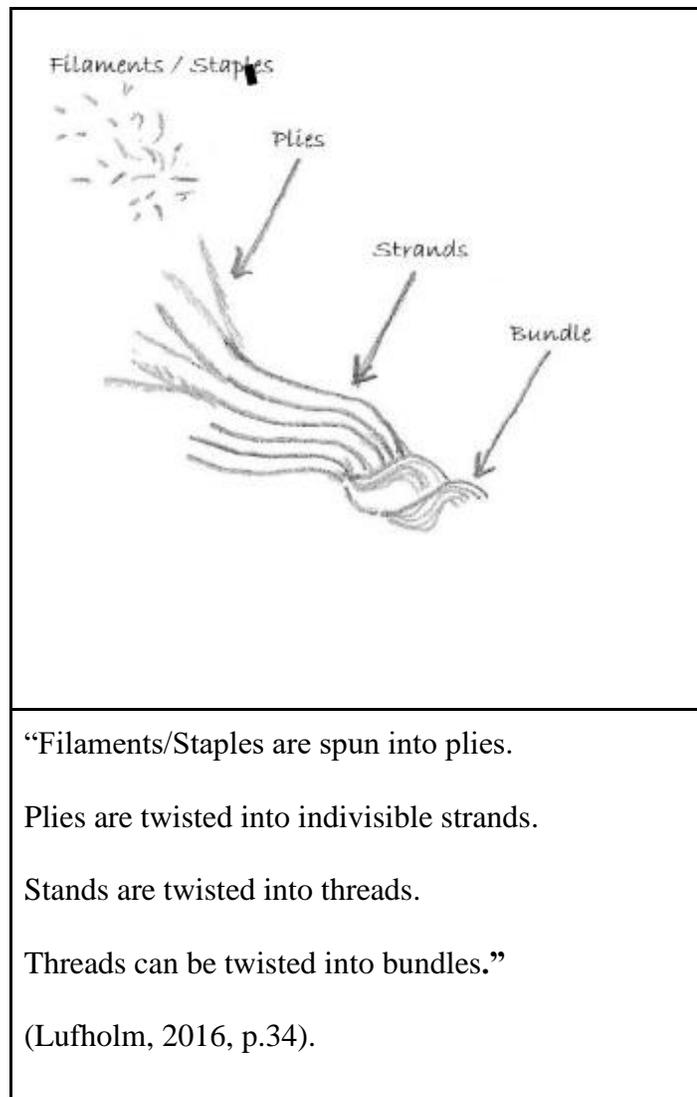
By having these tips and a good guide, a person is already set for making a new experience of embroidery.

An important tool that is needed for embroidery is the needle. Needles come in different shapes and sizes, and choosing one will depend on what fabric or what embroidery technique one is using. There is usually an optimum size and type of needle, such as 22 tapestry needle for 18 count canvas (Lufholm, 2016). Pick the needle that suits the purpose. Below are the different types of needles that can be identified with their names.



Types of Needles from Lufholm, (2016).

The second major tool for embroidery is the thread. This is the most complicated tool since the thread could come in different textures such as silk, cotton, linen, rayon, wool, and synthetics (Lufholm, 2016). In each thread, there are also various ways and terms on how to use it. Below is a really simplified description of the manufacturing process:



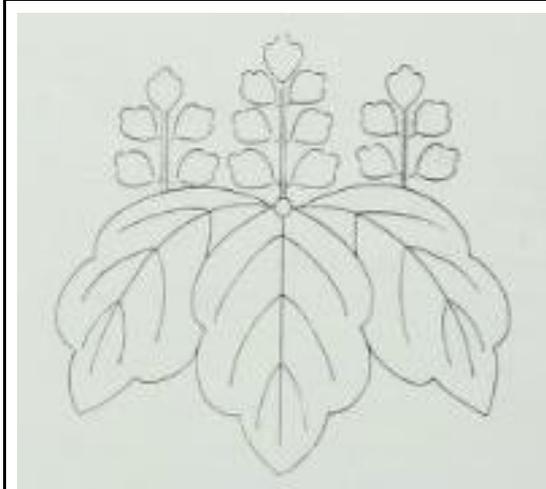
### Japanese Embroidery

This type of embroidery originated in Japan and is characterized by its use of silk threads and well-detailed patterns or images. The basis of the Japanese aesthetic sense is the primacy of beauty over practicality or utility (Shuji, 1998). Among the many unique aspects of Japanese embroidery is its use of motifs that have a symbolic connotation. These symbolic elements have been in use for so long and by such a broad spectrum of people that they are used almost as a form of shorthand. (Shuji, 1998). Japanese Embroidery takes a lot of inspiration and symbols

from nature. They use this with a deeper meaning behind every pattern or image. Flowers, birds, and other animals are often found in Japanese embroidery and have symbolism and meaning (Shuji, 1998). Below are the samples of symbols that commonly appear in Japanese embroidery and their meaning.



The most popular bird is the crane which symbolizes longevity ( Shuji, 1998).



The paulownia tree is borrowed from Chinese and legends hold that it is food for the mythological bird, the phoenix (Shuji, 1995).



A marine animal named shrimp is a common motif used in New Year decorations and represents the bounty of the sea. (Shuji, 1998).

The stitching techniques used in Japanese embroidery are also highly precise and exact, with stitches being placed at specific intervals to create the desired look. The tools are also different for other types of embroidery. They use a fabric instead of a canvas, and their methods are more complicated compared to traditional embroidery. This is because they have a different setup as well that includes specific equipment. According to Shuji (1998) *The Techniques of Japanese Embroidery*, Below is the list of the tools needed to perform Japanese embroidery:



Japanese embroidery tools Shuji, (1998).

- “Koma (Spools)- used as a pair for laying down non-stitchable thread when couching
- Needles- flat-eyed, hand-made needles in more than a dozen sizes for stitching with both flat and twisted thread
- Japanese scissors- Japanese embroidery scissors have no finger holes.
- Stroking needle (teko-bari)- a tampered piece of tempered steel about 4 inches long used to smooth and flatten silk threads.
- Awl- used for Japanese embroidery, is about 4 inches long. It has a wooden handle and a narrow tapered metal shaft that fits and wedges into one of the holes of the frame.
- Brush, dish, and shell powder- for tracing designs onto fabric.

- Small cotton cushion stuffed with cotton- for patting dust out of the embroidery
- Light-weight cardboard lamps- rest directly on the work and can be positioned to give light where needed.
- Protective paper- thin, transparent paper, which is rough on one side and smooth on the other to cover the already stitched area.
- Frame— Japanese embroidery is worked on a special frame that holds the fabric drum-taut” (Shuji, 1998).



Phase X of Japanese Embroidery shows many of the motifs and techniques used by Japanese Embroidery. This piece is copyrighted by JEC.

Floral motifs are one of the most common design elements. Botanical symbolism is so popular in Japan that it is considered to be a language of its own. Hanakotoba, the Japanese

“language of flowers”, holds that each flower has its own meaning determined by its physical attributes or historical connotations. Each flower symbol can therefore be used to convey a specific emotion or sentiment without the need to use spoken language. (Greg, 2016) Here are a few examples from Greg (2016).

- “Cherry blossom (sakura) is revered in Japanese culture. With its distinctive notched petals and brief blooming time, it has come to symbolise renewal, beauty and the transience of life.
- Peonies (botan) are known as the “King of Flowers” and are a symbol of good fortune, bravery and honor.
- Pine trees (matsu) are associated with winter and the new year. The evergreen pine has come to represent longevity, good fortune and steadfastness.
- Chrysanthemums (kiku) are the symbol of the Emperor and Imperial family, appearing on Japanese passports, the 50 yen coin and the Imperial Seal. It is said to represent regal beauty, longevity and rejuvenation.
- Carnations (kaneshon) commonly symbolize love and fascination. They’re often given as a gift on Mother’s Day in Japan.”



Figure 8, Greg, (2016). The Hidden Language of Japanese Embroidery, *Japan Craft*.

Overall, Japanese embroidery is a stunningly beautiful and highly precise form of needlework that is characterized by its use of silk threads and intricate designs. It has a rich history and cultural significance, combined with its demanding techniques and beauty, making it a treasured art form both in Japan and around the world.

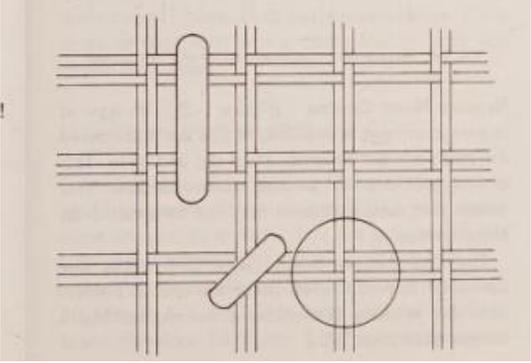
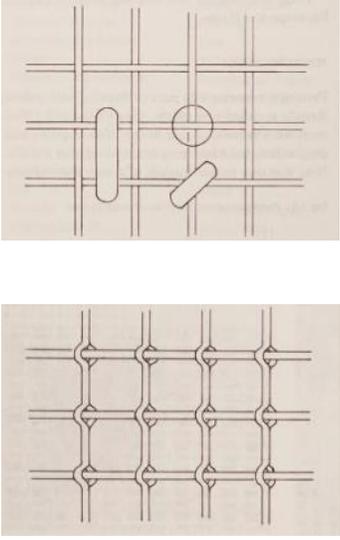
### Canvaswork Embroidery

The term ‘Canvas Embroidery’ has been chosen in preference to needlepoint or canvas work, because canvas can be used in many different ways, not just for densely worked pictures or to create a hard-wearing fabric for useful articles. (Field, et. el 1990). Needlepoint embroidery is carried out on a fairly stiff, open, even-weave fabric, made of cotton or linen and usually white, cream, or beige. (Field, et.el 1990). This type of embroidery uses less specialized materials and is ideal for beginners.

There are different types of stitches in canvas work and these are Straight Stitches, Diagonal Stitches, Box Stitches, Cross Stitches, Tied Stitches, Eye, Stitches, Leaf Stitches, and Decorative Stitches. (Christensen, 1976).

The main and special equipment for this type of technique is the canvas. The canvas made especially for needlepoint is loosely woven, with holes in it for the yarn to go through. It is made quite stiff with sizing. (Christensen, 1976). The other materials that are included for this technique are needle, yarn, scissors, tweezers, ruler, waterproof marker, and tape. There are two

basic kinds of canvas and these are the Penelope and Mono. See the pictures below to distinguish the differences and their descriptions.

	 <p><i>Regular Mono Canvas</i></p> <p><i>Interlock Mono Canvas</i></p>
<p>Penelope Canvas (Christensen, 1976)</p>	<p>Types of mono canvas, Christensen, (1976)</p>

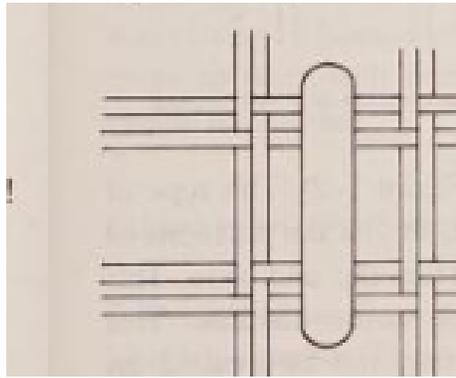
Penelope canvas is woven with pairs of thread and each thread is called one mesh.

Regular Mono canvas is unstable as the junctions of the mesh are not secured. Interlock mono has junctions that are wrapped around each other (Christensen, 1976).

*Canvas Embroidery Stitches*

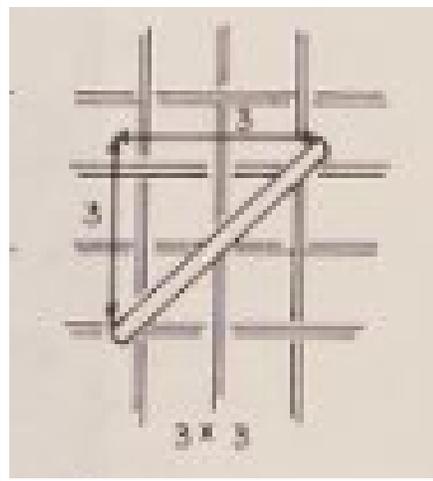
There are various types of stitches in canvas embroidery but the main stitches for beginners are straight stitches, diagonal stitches, box stitches, and cross stitches.

**Straight Stitches** are those stitches that cover the canvas vertically or horizontally (Christensen, 1976).



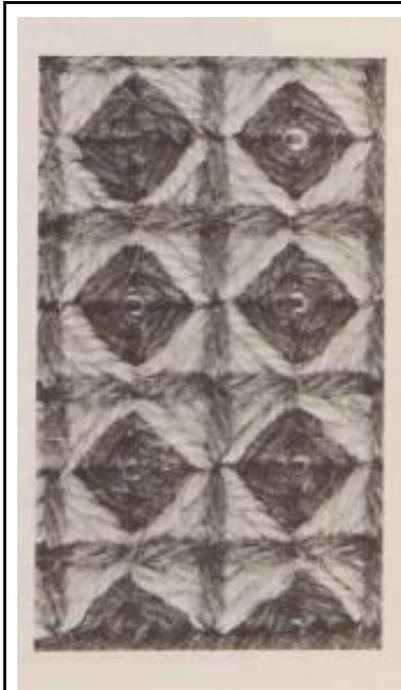
Straight Stitches (Christensen,1976)

**Diagonal Stitches** are those which cover the canvas by crossing junctions of mesh, rather than going between them (Christensen, 1976).



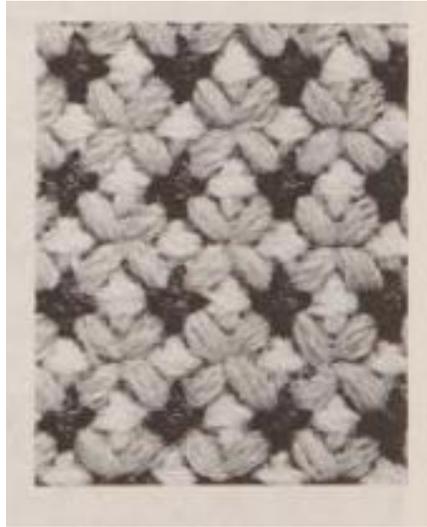
Diagonal Stiches (Christensen 1976)

**Box Stitches** are a series of stitches that form squares or boxes. The box stitches are simply boxes laid in a line (Christensen, 1976 ).



Box Stitches, (Christensen, 1976)

**Cross Stitches** makes pretty filling, design, and border stitches. They often stand alone to represent flowers (Christensen, 1976).



Cross Stiches (Christensen, 1976)

Bargello is a special kind of canvas work that creates geometric patterns. Bargello is straight stitches worked in a geometric pattern. These stitches can vary in size from two mesh tall to six mesh tall. When stitches are placed next to each other in a zigzag line, the distance between the top and the next stitch is called a step (Christensen, 1976).



Bargello (Christensen, 1976)

The earliest Bargello pieces come primarily from Hungary, Italy, and Great Britain—the oldest ones date back to the fourteenth century—but by the eighteenth century, bargello had traveled with the European colonists to North America, where it was adapted and worked enthusiastically (Minor, 2020). It consists of repeating sequences of stitches, creating motifs in geometric and symmetrical patterns. It often uses an analogous color scheme with values from light to dark. This is not a free-style form of needlework but rather an orderly, formal, and disciplined use of upright, vertical stitches. (Perry, 2022). By alternating colors in this way, the stitcher can create a colorful pattern that is both visually interesting and relatively simple to execute. The use of Bargello embroidery is a popular choice for creating visually stunning works of art, such as wall hangings and decorative pillows. Therefore, Bargello embroidery is a fascinating and rewarding needlework technique that offers a wide range of creative possibilities.

Its geometric patterns, bold colors, and relatively simple execution make it a popular choice among needleworkers and crafters.



Examples of Bargello (Perry, 2022)

### Crochet and Knitting

Crochet is a type of handicraft that involves creating fabric from yarn or thread using a hook. In recent years, crochet has seen a surge in popularity, with many people taking up the craft as a hobby or creative outlet. One of the attractions of the hobby is the ability to fit it in at different times during the day or night. (O'Dowd, 2021). The origins of knitting date back to the 5th century AD, and crocheting has been around since the 16th century in various forms. According to Ross (2022), “Knitting is believed to have originated in the Middle East in the 5th century and traveled to Europe with wool traders soon after”.

Crochet is a technique similar to knitting. Several things make crochet different from knitting. First, just one long piece of yarn is used and another is made into a series of interconnecting loops, using one or more needles. Second, woven and felted cloth is made and then cut to the required shape, but knitted and crocheted cloth can be shaped as it is made. (O'Reilly, 1949). Therefore both methods are really similar to each other and they are both types of handicrafts that are currently used as a hobby.

The materials used in these activities are very simple and can be found easily in nearby stores. For example, only yarn and a simple hook are needed for crochet, and knitting only needs two straight needles and yarn. The two straight needles were made from a variety of materials, such as metal, wood, and ivory (O'Reilly, 1949). The beauty of crochet and knitting is that by only having these materials, one can create a lot of different shapes and products. This is easy to teach and a healthy hobby for kids, unlike digital games which they often use as a pastime.

Crochet is a fun activity that is repetitive and easy to learn. There are various steps when doing crochet and all start from a hook and an untangled yarn. The term crochet is thought to derive from the French word meaning 'hook'. Crochet refers to the process of creating fabric by interlocking loops of yarn (Burns & Van Der Meer, 2021). A survey found that respondents reported that crochet made them feel calmer, happier, and more useful. Respondents also reported that crochet was good for their memory and that it helped improve their concentration. These results support research that has shown that older adults, aged 70-89 years, have decreased odds of developing mild cognitive impairment when they reported participating in craft activities, such as knitting (Burns & Van Der Meer, 2021).



Crochet and yarn(O'Reilly, 1949).

The process of knitting is repetitive and easy to apply. Each time a stitch is made, the needle is put into the front of the loop and this is called plain knitting. In knitting instructions, plain knitting is always called “knit” stitches. (O'Reilly, 1949). However, there are different ways of making stitches. One example is Purl Stitch and its process is keeping the yarn at the front of the work. Put the right needle into the top of the stitch on the left needle from right to left. Then, bring the yarn between the needles and around the right needle. Twist through to make a stitch on the right needle. Slip the first stitch off the left needle (See the below figure for the example)



Knitting (O'Reilly, 1949).

Knitting has been reported anecdotally to help people focus and retain information during meetings or other situations that require prolonged attention. Several studies have investigated the benefits of knitting and supported these claims.

For example, “it enables people to feel and be " successful” at a task from their armchairs. This acts as a springboard to involvement in other activities. Being successful is pivotal to motivation and a lack of motivation to self-manage long-term medical conditions is a big problem faced by clinicians” (Corkhill et al. 2014 p.39). It also found that knitting can help

to alleviate symptoms of anxiety, depression, and chronic pain, possibly due to its ability to induce a state of relaxation.

Case studies have shown that focus and retention can be improved with knitting. When people who have ADHD can control or direct their movements, focus and concentration are improved. Thus the human brain stem controls basic body functions such as breathing, heart rate, alertness, etc. Research has found that people with ADHD can have brain stem irregularities that impair alertness and focus. Movement, such as knitting, is an effective way to stimulate the brain stem, which sends signals to the brain that help us to focus (Zen News, 2022).

### Crochet and Ed-Tech: The Winning Combination of The Woobles

The year 2020 was marked by the global pandemic, which had a significant impact on people's lives worldwide. However, amidst this challenging time, The Woobles, a learn-to-crochet company, emerged to offer a source of comfort and distraction to those seeking new hobbies and skills. The company's founders, a husband-and-wife team, managed to secure a \$7.5 million valuation by attracting a host of investors in the fiercely competitive market.

The Woobles prides itself on being the first company to leverage emerging ed-tech tools to teach the art of crocheting to complete beginners. The company's primary aim is to help customers build confidence by learning and perfecting a new lifelong skill through its growing assortment of all-inclusive crochet kits. Since its launch in 2020, The Woobles has successfully helped over 100,000 people learn to crochet by pairing its simple patterns and proprietary Easy Peasy yarn with the latest advancements in ed-tech, including step-by-step video tutorials and around-the-clock virtual expert assistance (The Woobles, 2023).

The success of The Woobles has made crocheting more accessible and enjoyable for people of all ages and backgrounds. The kits have easy-to-understand tutorials and convenient learning options which have attracted many who were previously intimidated by the idea of learning a new craft. Additionally, the company's innovative use of technology has made it easier for people to access expert guidance and support, even from the comfort of their own homes.

The Woobles have played an essential role in promoting the art of crocheting and making it more accessible to a wider audience. Through its innovative use of technology and its commitment to providing easy-to-use materials and tutorials, the company has helped many people discover the joy and satisfaction of learning a new skill.

According to The Woobles, the following are materials that are used in wobble kits. The kit came in a resealable bag, and inside the bag was everything that a person needed to get started. It included:

- “A crochet hook
- Yarn - The kit included blue, yellow, white, and black yarn (in case you wanted to stitch on eyes instead of using the fasteners - more on that later!).

The blue yarn that would make the body also came with a piece called the "magic loop" to help get started faster.

- It also had 3 stitch markers inside it.
- Plush Stuffing
- The Wee Wooble Bits Bag - This pack included little pieces that would become the eyes.
- Video Tutorials- The kit also came with a card of the penguin and on the other side were instructions on how to get to the videos” (The Woobles, 2023).



The Woobles, 2023.

### The Impact of Technological Advances on Embroidery

Embroidery techniques have remained largely unchanged over the centuries, despite the rise of new technologies. This is due in part to the fact that embroidery is a slow and time-consuming process that requires a great deal of patience and skill. Over the past several decades, technological advancements have revolutionized many aspects of our daily lives. From smartphones to artificial intelligence, technology has made our lives easier, more efficient, and more convenient. However, there is growing concern that these advancements have also made people lazier and less self-sufficient, leading to a decline in traditional skills and crafts such as embroidery.

Machine embroidery began in the middle of the 19th century with the invention of the hand embroidery machine. The operator was required to move the fabric above and below the needle with a hand crank and guided the needles along a pattern. Despite the effort it took to work the machine, it was an efficient innovation, doing the labor of four hand embroiderers. Just after the turn of the century, in 1911, the first multi-head embroidery machine was invented,

allowing users to produce multiple pieces of work at once (Shopworks Business Software, March 1, 2019).

The history of machine embroidery is quite remarkable. The first machine was used in private homes and needed to be operated by two people. This then evolved and these hand machines were replaced by Schiffli machines. This machine used two threads instead of a single thread. It was also 20 times faster than the previous model. (Bags of Love, n.d.) Now that we rely less on women to clothe their bodies and beautify their homes, it's clear that needlework is more than just women's work. It's a profoundly time-consuming and gratifying art that has extended beyond the realm of female domesticity (Nemsmith, Lindsey, August 01, 2018). With the continuous technical updating and improvement of computerized embroidery machines, the base fabric of machine embroidery has been extended to a wide range of fabrics, and embroidery techniques have become more diverse (Viva Textile, n.d.).

### Fast Fashion

One of the more technological innovations is fast fashion. Fast fashion is the term used to describe clothing designs that move quickly from the catwalk to stores to take advantage of trends. The collections are often based on styles presented at Fashion Week runway shows or worn by celebrities. Fast fashion allows mainstream consumers to purchase the hot new look or the next big thing at an affordable price. (Haye, 2022). These garments are often designed to be worn only a few times and then thrown away, and they sell for far less than traditional clothing brands. It has also grown rapidly over the years and has been carefully studied for its environmental and social impact

Approximately 90 % of clothing sold in the United States is made with cotton or polyester, both associated with significant health impacts from the manufacturing and production processes. Polyester, a synthetic textile, is derived from oil, while cotton requires large amounts of water and pesticides to grow. Textile dyeing results in additional hazards as untreated wastewater from dyes are often discharged into local water systems, releasing heavy metals and other toxicants that can adversely impact the health of animals in addition to nearby residents (Bick et al., 2018).

Fast fashion impacts garment workers who work in dangerous environments, for low wages, and without fundamental human rights. Further down the supply chain, the farmers may work with toxic chemicals and brutal practices that can have devastating impacts on their physical and mental health, a plight highlighted by the documentary “The True Cost“. (Srauturier, 2023). In addition, As much as 73% of material going into the clothing system is lost after final garment use, 10% is lost during garment production (e.g. as offcuts)<sup>60</sup> and 2% is sent to landfill or incineration from garments that are produced, yet never make it to market. (*A New Textiles Economy: Redesigning Fashion’s Future, n.d.-b*).

### Benefits of Handicrafts

As part of this project, I explored the benefits of handicrafts as I search for information on types of embroidery. Through my own experience, I personally observed the benefits and wanted to know more so I search the world wide web for more information. Embroidery and other handicraft activities are not only a means of occupying one's time but can also provide several mental health benefits. According to the American Art Therapy Association (2017), art therapy is an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of

individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship (American Art Therapy Association, 2017). This type of therapy recognizes that certain emotions cannot always be expressed in words and that engaging in art-making activities can promote deep focus, relaxation, and self-awareness.

According to helpful blog information Embroidery For Mental Health (n.d.), there are 11 ways embroidery boosts our mental health. These quoted below include:

1. Reduces Stress and Anxiety - Crafts ranging from knitting to baking to gardening have all been shown to improve mood and lower stress, and embroidery works the same way. It's an act of multi-layered sensory engagement, and the focus, repetition, and anticipation of success are all associated with the neurotransmitters for joy and well-being while also reducing stress hormones.
2. Lower Blood Pressure and Heart Rate- Because embroidery gets us to stop focusing on whatever is stressing us out and focus instead on the task in front of us, it gets us out of the perpetual stress loop. In doing so, it tugs us out of the cycle that keeps our blood pressure and heart rate high as if we're always being chased by lions.
3. Road to Recovery- That was the case for Michelle Beaulieu-Morgan, a digital accessibility specialist at Yale University who rediscovered embroidery during 2015 in her Ph.D. According to

her, reestablishing embroidery as a creative habit helped her get through her Ph.D. dissertation—and quit drinking.

4. Promotes Control- One of the reasons embroidery is such an effective therapeutic technique is the powerful sense of control, a challenge for many people struggling with feelings of depression and anxiety.
5. Emotional Release- Artists across history have turned to their work as a means of releasing emotion, and embroidery works the same way—even for emotions you didn't realize you wanted to express.
6. Self-Discovery- In the process, embroidery also creates space for self-discovery. Crafts like embroidery give you a chance to fire up different neural pathways and think differently than you would at work or school. In doing so, you get the chance to release things you didn't realize you were holding—and even discover some things about yourself in the process.
7. Enhances Creativity - As Kaitlin Knapp, the clinical program manager at Ascension St. Vincent and Peyton Manning Children's Hospital, many people shy away from art therapy because they're hyperfocused on the final product. They tend to respond the same way: "I haven't done art since elementary school," or "I can't draw a straight line with a ruler." The key, Knapp says, isn't the final product. It's about the process. It's not

just about creating something pretty, either—it's about celebrating your emotions, whatever that means in the moment and whatever that looks like for you. And once you give yourself permission to explore your emotions in this way, you'll be surprised at your own ability to express yourself.

8. Builds Confidence- Embroidery is unique from a lot of other arts in that you get to watch your project unfold literally one stitch at a time. Your efforts are physically reflected in an unfolding pattern. And with every stitch, you get another small reminder that you're capable of doing what you set your mind to.
9. Builds Patience- Granted, this process takes time (a lot of time) which means embroidery is also excellent for mastering the art of patience.
10. Boost Cognitive Skills- According to one study, crafting, reading, and playing games can reduce your risk of developing mild cognitive impairment by 30% to 50%. Crafting in particular is unique because it requires you to use multiple parts of your brain—not just your visuospatial processing, but also your memory, attention span, and problem-solving.
11. Enhances Sleep Quality- Because embroidery gives you an opportunity to let go of your stress and anxiety, it allows you to unravel a lot of that unconscious tension. In the process, you can give your conscious and unconscious mind a rest—and give

yourself a boost in your quality of sleep. (Embroidery For Mental Health, n.d.)

Overall, embroidery is a beneficial activity that provides numerous mental health benefits, including reducing stress and anxiety, promoting control, building confidence and patience, and enhancing sleep quality. It is a unique form of art therapy that can help individuals to express themselves and discover new things about themselves, leading to improved mental well-being.

### Embroidery as a Form of Art Therapy for Mental Health

Embroidery is a form of needlework that involves decorating fabric or other materials with needle and thread. In recent years, embroidery has been used as a form of art therapy, with therapists incorporating it into their treatment plans for a variety of mental health concerns. “As a society, we are so burnt out,” says Psychologist Emma Kenny. “We need to release our anxiety but we also feel that we need to have something to show for that. Crafts like embroidery enable us to zone out and tap into something good for us. It connects you with something tribal and instinctive” (Embroidery as Therapy, 2022).

### Summary

There are many compelling reasons to consider taking up handicrafts such as embroidery or crochet. Beyond the sense of productivity that comes from engaging in a creative activity, these crafts have been shown to offer numerous mental health benefits. From reducing stress and anxiety to promoting emotional release and self-discovery, embroidery has been linked to improvements in both physical and emotional wellbeing. Additionally, engaging in these

activities can help to enhance cognitive skills, build patience, and even improve the quality of sleep. Given all of these potential benefits, it is clear that embroidery and crochet are worthwhile pursuits for those looking to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

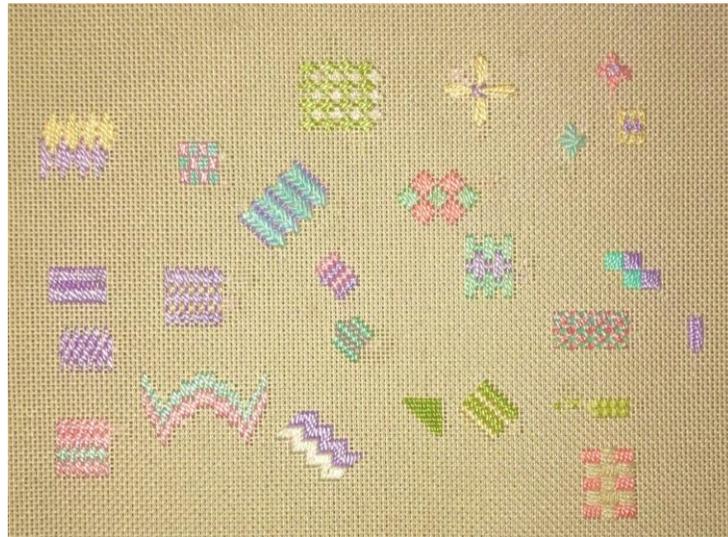
### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, learning about the origins and evolution of embroidery and its various mental benefits. While discovering a new hobby can be difficult at times, embroidery is a wonderful and simple art therapy that anyone can do. Despite its possible undervaluation in modern times due to the prevalence of sewing machines and other technologies, embroidery remains a valuable activity that can be done by anyone at home.

Embroidery provides numerous benefits for both physical and mental health, including reducing stress, improving concentration, enhancing creativity, and promoting relaxation. In addition, the satisfaction and sense of accomplishment that comes with completing a project can be incredibly rewarding. It is a productive and positive way to spend your time that is much better than mindlessly scrolling through social media.

Therefore, I highly recommend embroidery as a hobby, especially to young people who may benefit from its many advantages. Along with embroidery, there are other related activities like crochet and knitting that are also great for mental health and can provide a sense of fulfillment. By engaging in such activities, we can take small but significant steps towards improving our overall well-being and leading a more fulfilling life. My advise from this experience is that, why not give it a try and see the positive impact it can have on your life?

### **Learning Reflection:**

Bargello Embroidery

Canvas Work Sampler by Naomi Pilapil

As a beginner, learning the art of embroidery was initially a daunting task for me. I found myself struggling to grasp the techniques and getting frustrated by my inability to see the holes clearly. At times, I even doubted whether this craft was truly helpful for improving mental health, as I felt stressed and anxious while attempting to learn.

However, with time and patience, I began to understand that my stress was not caused by the activity itself, but rather by the challenges of learning something new. I had forgotten that the process of acquiring new skills can be a difficult and even painful journey. But as I persisted and overcame the initial hurdles, I discovered the joy and satisfaction of creating beautiful embroidered pieces.

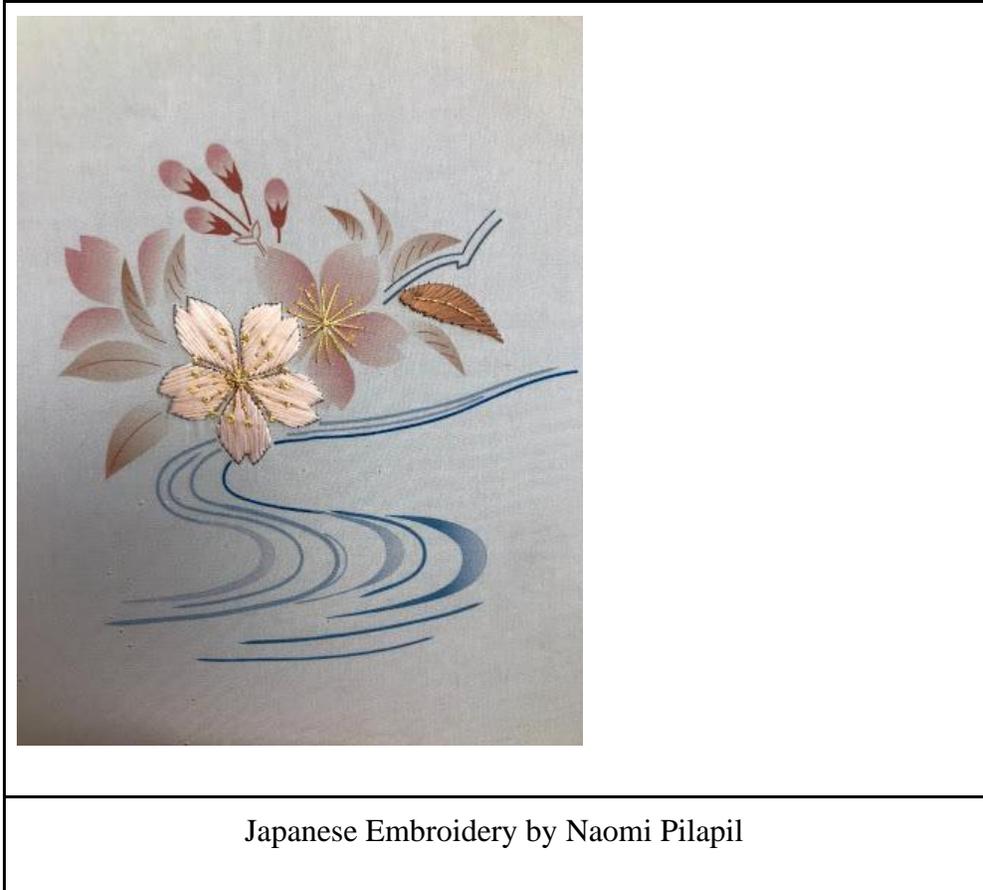
Through the guidance of my teacher, Ms. Gail Stafford, I was able to learn a variety of stitches that are showcased in the picture below. While there were a few mistakes along the way,

such as losing consistency in my stitch counts while attempting the yellow and purple stitch combination, I was able to use those mistakes as opportunities to practice and improve.

The end result was a collection of stunning canvas embroidery stitches, including beautiful curve patterns in baby blue and light pink, slanted and diagonal patterns in purple and white, green, green and yellow, baby blue and light pink, and pink and purple. While I struggled the most with the curve patterns, I found the basic satin stitch (shown in all purple on the top left) to be the easiest.

Overall, I found the process of learning embroidery to be a rewarding and fulfilling experience. Not only did it provide a relaxing and meditative outlet for me, but it also allowed me to develop a new skill and create beautiful pieces of art.

### Japanese Embroidery



Japanese Embroidery by Naomi Pilapil

Japanese embroidery is an art form that requires a great deal of patience, concentration, and skill. I recently had the opportunity to work on a Japanese Embroidery project and I must say, it was quite challenging. Although I have experience with embroidery, this type of embroidery was the most difficult one I have done so far for this project.

Initially, I was hesitant about working on this project because I preferred Bargello embroidery more. I found it easier to work with a canvas that had larger holes and thread that was easier to manage. However, as I progressed with the Japanese Embroidery project, I began to appreciate the beauty of this traditional embroidery style. The silk threads that I used gave the embroidery a stunning sheen and the intricate designs were truly breathtaking.

Despite the beauty of the final product, I found the process of Japanese Embroidery to be mentally taxing. One of the biggest challenges for me was keeping the thread in the needle. The silk thread was so fine and slippery that it was difficult to keep it in the needle. Additionally, making sure that the thread lay flat on the fabric was a lot of work. This required a great deal of attention and focus which consumed me with stress.

In my own experience, I do not think that Japanese Embroidery was the most effective way to benefit my mental health. While I appreciate the beauty of this traditional embroidery style, I found that it required too much concentration and attention to detail. I prefer embroidery styles that allow me to relax and unwind while creating something beautiful. However, I am grateful for the opportunity to try Japanese Embroidery and to challenge myself to learn new techniques and styles.

### Crochet



Pierre the Penguin by Naomi Plapil

Learning how to crochet was a fun and exciting experience for me. Compared to the other two types of embroidery, crochet involves the use of both hands and doesn't require a canvas. I was introduced to a specific type of crochet called "The Woobles" by Mario Benedek and Corey Ogilvie, which I found to be a great way to unwind and relax. What I loved about crochet was how simple and creative it was. All I needed was a ball of yarn and the tools from the kit, and I could create something adorable to take home. The process was made even easier by the video tutorials provided in the kit, which made it easy for anyone to learn at their own pace.

I would highly recommend Crochet to anyone who is looking for a new hobby. Not only is it a relaxing and therapeutic activity, but it is also very convenient and easy to do. In fact, I found it to be the most effective way to improve my mental health, as it allowed me to focus on something creative and positive. Overall, the process of learning crochet was a truly rewarding experience that I will always cherish.

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