

Handmade Home: Simple Ways to Repurpose Old Materials into New Family Treasures

Amanda Blake Soule

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A quilt made by Grandma, a child's artwork, Great-Grandmothers handkerchiefs—these are the things that bring an extra touch of warmth to the home and heart. Handmade items like these seem to carry a piece of the creator within them, and they evoke fond memories and feelings of connectedness that comfort those who see and use them.

In *Handmade Home*, the author presents thirty-three projects that are both utilitarian and decorative, and add that extra touch of warmth and fun to the home. Many of these can be made with children, and some even incorporate kids artwork. For example, the Portrait Bookmarks are made by having a child draw a self-portrait on fabric, then embroidering the lines to create a permanent picture. The results range from blobs with only eyes and a mouth to stick figures complete with clothing.

Soule, author of *The Creative Family* and the popular blog, SouleMama*,* emphasizes living simply, connecting with family, and minimizing ones impact on the environment. These values are evident in her designs for reusable shopping bags, cloth diapers, and a baby sling. She also gives tips for choosing, preparing, and finding repurposed fabrics, including a guide to shopping thrift stores with children in tow. The Memory Tree Quilt Art even gives parents a chance to save those sentimental baby clothes in a beautiful display.

Due to the family and child focus, this book will appeal mainly to crafting parents. The projects are rated beginner, intermediate, and advanced, but even with the beginner designs some sewing knowledge is helpful. For example, the reader will need to know what batting and bias tape are, and though each project includes color photos of the completed item, there are no photos for the individual steps in the directions. The directions are well written and clear, however, so a basic familiarity with sewing should be enough to make them easy to complete.

"Making things by hand is a way I share my love and a bit of myself with those dearest to me," Soule writes. The projects in this book provide readers with creative ideas for sharing their own love through fun and useful handiwork.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (June 12, 2009)

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