ForeWord Reviews

CRAFTS & HOBBIES

**Hoopla: The Art of Unexpected Embroidery**
Leanne Prain
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If you thought embroidery was just for hankies and little girls' church shirts, you will quickly dispose of such nonsense when you peek into the colorful pages of *Hoopla.* Part how-to, part investigative exploration and *all* inspired, Hoopla will broaden your mind and tug on your creative heartstrings. In her second book, Leanne Prain, co-author of *Yarn Bombing: The Art of Crochet and Knit Graffiti*, turns her focus to embroidery and the myriad of ways in which this quiet activity of patience and intention can create work that inspires discussion, activism, and a better understanding of one another.

One of the many perks to embroidery is that to begin you need very little. A single stitching method can be implemented in an endless variety of ways. Materials are inexpensive, and can often be found at thrift stores or around the house. Prain offers clear, pertinent tips to get the novice started, as well as a thorough discussion of materials, instruction with diagrams for a wide variety of stitches, how to transfer designs onto fabric, and even tips for dying your own floss.

But because *Hoopla* celebrates truly inventive and unexpected embroidery, the how-to portions of the book are beautifully interwoven with inspired photographs and thoughtful interviews with embroidery renegades whose work is like nothing you've ever seen in a kit. Comprising nearly half of the book, these excursions will inspire novices, experts, and anyone interested in the resurgence of the arts-and-crafts movement. The artists explore societal and political issues, personal strife, and the marvelous and multi-faceted delights of our natural and imaginary worlds. Work includes cloth-bodied dolls embroidered with vintage tattoos, city maps stitched into sheets, wall-hangings pierced with the names of newly fallen soldiers. Likewise, the stories shared by the artists testify to the power of this art both in the lives of the artists and in those who receive it. Take, for example, the story of former inmate, Ray Materson, who began his 2"x3" masterpieces by using thread from unraveled prison socks.

Hoopla features twenty-nine projects, most designed by the embroidery masters showcased in the book. Each offers clear directions and helpful photographs and is preceded by

a list of necessary tools, materials, and stitches required to complete the project. And each is unexpected, ranging from a bedspread adorned with an urban landscape, entitled “All Good In The Hood,” to hankies decorated with funky microbes. Some projects are basic and may be completed quickly, others are more elaborate, but all are intended as a springboard—for ultimately *Hoopla* is a celebration of the work that has yet to be created, stitches still seeking a voice.

*Jennifer Sperry Steinorth*