

In Praise of the Needlewoman

*The Iconography of the Embroiderer in Western Art
1500-Present*



By

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Under the auspices of

The National Academy of Needlearts

For

Bob, my husband

Michele, Cheryl and Tony, my children

Connor, my grandson

and

in memory of

Gabrielle Curie Grace

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Introduction

As a needlework instructor I am frequently invited to teach classes at various locations around the country, sometimes for chapters of the Embroiderers' Guild of America or the American Needlepoint Guild, other times for seminars sponsored by these or other similar organizations, and occasionally in needlework shops. Often I am asked to do a program for the entire chapter (the aforementioned class would probably only accommodate 20 stitchers) and this usually takes the form of some kind of slide presentation. Most traveling needlework teachers have at least one slide presentation in their repertoire for such occasions.

Several years ago I determined I needed a new slide presentation, and I became interested in collecting needleworks that portrayed the human form. I called this slide presentation "Portraits in Embroidery." For it I collected slides both from my colleagues and from other stitchers; all these slides showed stitched portraits in some fashion or another. To introduce the presentation I thought it might be interesting to show how painters had also depicted the human form; in fact, this was a common form of painting and often how an artist managed to support himself, i.e., by doing portraits. Since this slide presentation was definitely directed at stitchers I thought it would be appropriate to find perhaps 5-10 paintings that depicted women stitching.

This task turned out to be much easier than I had ever anticipated. Right away I was able to identify numerous paintings, mostly Impressionist, that showed women engaged in sewing, embroidery, or some other related needleart. I came across these in address books and day journals, on calendars, post cards, and posters; most of these were commonly available in bookstores or museum shops. The Impressionists were prominently represented, undoubtedly because their art is very popular in America today, and sells well. I easily had my 10 images with which to introduce "Portraits in Embroidery."

In the process I became entranced with the paintings! I could not refrain from searching for them, and everywhere I looked I found more. I eagerly bought up the calendars and day journals, and the post cards, then graduated to art books and the occasional poster. Before I knew it I had identified enough paintings of people stitching, knitting, crocheting, weaving, spinning, or making lace to produce a second slide presentation. I entitled this second slide show "In Praise of the Needlewoman" which is an allusion to an early needlework poem called "In Prayse of the Needle".

Sometimes I had to beg the needlework guilds to let me present this second slide presentation; after all, it wasn't really about stitching. It was really about painting.

When I decided to write this Honors Dissertation I really stepped up my research. In analyzing this, I would say I took two different approaches. First of all I went on the Internet, searching out paintings all over the world. Sometimes I discovered that a museum had a certain painting (that I had found in a book, for instance) and I would find its web site and request a slide of the painting in question. Some museums were remarkably easy to deal with, and a few e-mails and a credit card number would produce some slides in my mail box a week or so later. This was

especially true of the Tate Gallery in London, and the Manchester City Art Gallery, also in England, the St. Louis Art Museum and the Joslyn Gallery in Omaha in the United States. France and its centralized system was also very user friendly, even with the language barrier.

Other museums were exasperatingly difficult to deal with; endless e-mails and phone calls and faxes elicited nothing but frustration. How annoying for me to know that a certain painting would really round out a section of my presentation and written work, but to be unable to obtain a slide of it.

Permission to print an image in my written dissertation was another challenge. Some museums were very forthcoming and responsive; in a short time I had the written permission and the appropriate photo. Others have not come through even after months of requests on my part. It is prudent to have backup plans for such situations.

While attempting to purchase slides of paintings I had already identified, I discovered some excellent museum web sites (and some pretty poor ones, too). Some of these allowed me to search by subject matter, and I was able to find many more paintings that depicted women stitching. Other times I just stumbled across these paintings, usually by searching under key words such as “sewing”, “knitting”, “crocheting”, “lace”, “weaving”, and believe it or not, “window.” So surfing the web sites of art museums was most productive. However, there are hundreds of museums worldwide and one cannot possibly see them all, even from the comfort of one’s home studio. And sometimes the foreign language of the web site brought me to a standstill, even though I can muddle through several European languages.

My “real life” strategy—as opposed to the virtual strategy of the web sites—was to visit museums and to go to exhibits. I am fortunate to be at a stage of life where I have the time to travel, the physical stamina to do so, and also the wherewithal. And so I began in earnest to visit museums all over the world. If at any time I had reason to be in a city with an art collection, off I would go to the museum, usually dragging my ever-indulgent husband, or child, or friend along with me. Sometimes I would only be in a city for a few hours; nevertheless, the museum (and certainly the cathedral, another of my passions) would be my first priority.

Chicago and its great museum was a frequent port of call; the Art Institute of Chicago sponsors numerous wonderful special exhibits and is only a short train ride or plane flight away. I was also fortunate to visit Houston and Boston on more than one occasion for their special exhibits. Sometimes, when on road trips, I insisted we go out of our way to visit some small remote museum just to see one painting of a stitcher (the Hyde Collection in Glens Falls, NY comes to mind). Because of all this I have discovered some wonderful small museums across this country and in others that I might never have visited otherwise.

My husband had occasion to go to England for a special car show; we followed that up with numerous stops at art museums and galleries all over England and Scotland. My daughter and I went on a Baltic Sea cruise; my motivation was to visit the Hermitage, one of the world’s great collections of art. We turned this cruise into an art tour, stopping in museums in every capital city on the Baltic, and in these I found lots of stitchers. What fun! How gratifying! How

overwhelming! I knew now I could never identify them all. I even found stitchers in China—lots of them, both real and painted, but regretfully left them out of this dissertation so as to limit its scope.

I have even infected my family and friends with my quest. My daughter Cheryl, a librarian by training and a researcher by inclination, has ferreted out many obscure paintings in very arcane places. It is she who shares my passion the most. My sister-in-law Jessie Sirna—an art history professor and another avid traveler—has brought back slides and post cards from the most out of the way museums all over the world. Even the guild members who have attended my early “pre-production” runs of the slide presentation have occasionally found a “stitcher” for me. Nevertheless, the vast majority of these artworks have been identified by me in my research.

If there is an epiphany in this whole project it is that I have realized that sewing and embroidery are the “threads” that bind us (mostly women) to past generations and future generations, and to women around the world. The paintings I have identified range back as far as the 1400’s, showing that women were doing handwork then, just as now. The artists who painted these women are from all over the western world, and indeed the eastern world, too. Every culture has sewing and embroidering in some fashion, as has every era. Literature gives us even more proof of this—sewing and weaving are mentioned as early as the Old Testament—but that is someone else’s dissertation. Even today women—and some men—all over the world are busy with their handwork. Some do it professionally, some do it out of necessity, some do it for pleasure, and some do it for creative expression. But it is my observation that in all cultures and in all times there is an imperative to take needle and thread in hand and produce something either useful or decorative. And often, once dire necessity is overcome, this stitching becomes decorative and ultimately artistic.

As an embroiderer all I have to do is bring out my stitching in some public place and instantly people want to see what I am doing. The very act of stitching seems to be an icebreaker, even across cultures. Once in the backwaters of Peru our train was delayed and I took out my knitting to pass the time. Our guide was so surprised that an American woman with the means to travel this far would spend her time occupied with the same domestic activity as the village women in his country. Believe me, those women were all about me to look at my yarn and my pattern; they didn’t speak English, they didn’t even speak Spanish, but only their unwritten indigenous language, yet we connected with one another. I had similar experiences in China where needleart abounds, some of it amazing in its virtuosity.

Along the way I have developed some other fascinations. One is with women artists, so often forgotten or never recognized. Often stitchers were painted by women artists who were limited in the contact they had with men and so devoted themselves to painting other women. Another interest I have developed is paintings of the Annunciation; many times the Virgin is depicted with a basket of yarn alluding to her dutifulness, and piety.

And so the paintings of needleworkers will remain a lifelong quest; I will never stop looking for them, and will probably continue to collect slides long after the occasion for giving my presentation has ceased to exist.

Note on Selection

Once I had accumulated several hundred slides of paintings that depicted women (and sometimes men) sewing, embroidering, knitting, crocheting, weaving, spinning, and making lace, the difficult task was to decide which images to use.

In truth, there were actually three different venues for which I require images from this research. Of primary importance is the slide presentation on March 17, 2002. This will be given at the annual Assembly for Embroiderers of the National Academy of Needlearts, the sponsoring body for which I am writing this dissertation. For this oral presentation I will probably use about 180 slides, and I anticipate the presentation taking at least an hour and a half. Visual aides other than the slides will also be on display.

Images have been chosen to represent as many artistic movements as possible. I want a broad representation from the last 500 years. But in some cases I include an image because I love it.

On other occasions, for presentations at guild chapters and the like, I will require a shorter slide presentation, and a number of images from the longer presentation will regretfully be eliminated.

For the actual writing of the dissertation I was forced to limit the number of images I was able to use. Many of the images were difficult to obtain, or very costly, and space was a definite issue. I therefore selected images which I thought supported the hypotheses I articulated, and which were representative of various art movements in the past 500 years.

So there are several paintings by the Impressionists included in the written text; there was a large number to choose from. There are what I consider to be seminal paintings—Gilbert Stuart's *Mrs. Yates* and John Singleton Copley's *Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin*, for instance. Artists who painted a number of stitchers are also represented—Bouguereau is a good example. Revolutionary movements such as the Pre-Raphaelites are represented by a couple of images. Outstanding painters from earlier times could not be forgotten; I am thinking of Vermeer and Velasquez.

No doubt my own personal preferences have influenced the choice of images to include in the written work. It is my sincere hope that the final assemblage includes both familiar images and new and unfamiliar ones.

Brief Summation of the History of Painting

It seems that man has always had an impulse to express himself in the visual arts, whether with sculpture or with painting. Perhaps it is the artistic imperative to create; perhaps it is the desire to leave a record for future generations; but the artistic impulse resonates throughout the ages. We have only small samples of early painting, but we do have enough of it to know that our ancestors regarded art as part of their lives.

The Cave Paintings: The earliest evidence we have of this are the wonderful cave paintings found at Altamira in Spain and at Lascaux in France which may date back as far as 30,000 years. These are no mere idle scratchings on walls; they are planned and vibrant and took much effort for the artist to produce. They were placed in a location safe from the elements and rendered with much difficulty, considering that the light source was a small stone lamp. Several steps were required for their execution: first, the scratching on of a design; next, the devising and developing of paint—which involved grinding up minerals into (perhaps) animal fat—and finally its application to the walls. Whether these were devotional paintings, or just records of daily life, or a desire to express emotions regarding the life of our forebears we do not know, but what a record they have left for us.

Egypt and Tomb Paintings: “Much of what we know about ancient Egypt comes from the surviving tombs. ... Sculpture and paintings followed a rigid formula for representing the human figure.”¹

Extensive tomb paintings exist and follow the prescription for assisting the tomb’s resident into the afterlife. Gods are depicted as welcoming and judging the deceased; also depicted are events from his life. In many cases even the mummy’s case is painted with these prescribed figures. The colors are amazingly brilliant, considering their age. In addition to the extensive collection in Egypt, tomb paintings have also been left by the ancient Etruscans and the Greeks.

Palace Painting: Minoan art is largely represented by its carvings and painted pottery, and it is not until 1500 BC, during the great “Palace period” that we see paintings at all.² The Minoan civilization was followed by that of the Mycenaeans who have also left us a small number of murals.

Vase painting: the Greeks were evidently prodigious painters, if we can go by commentaries in their written legacies, but most of what we have remaining are their vase paintings. Almost all are rendered in either red on black (these are earlier) or black on red. The scenes portrayed range from gods and goddesses, to military exploits, to domestic scenes. Emphasis is on the human figure. It is from these that we gain insight into the life of the ancient Greeks.

¹ *The Annotated Mona Lisa*. Strickland, Carole. Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1992, p. 9.

² *Sister Wendy’s Story of Painting*. Beckett, Sr. Wendy. New York: DK Publishing, 1994, p.14.

Frescoes and Murals: Most of what we have remaining from the Roman Empire are wall paintings. These were done either as true frescoes, i.e., the painting was done on fresh—wet—plaster or as fresco secco, on dry plaster. Roman painting was greatly influenced by the Greek, but theirs was much more factual and they were able to draw from their architectural prowess to open up space visually inside buildings by skillful use of frescoes. A good example of their work, although most likely the work of provincial artists, are the frescoes at Pompeii. Also dominant in this era were magnificent mosaics, which fortunately survive in great quantities throughout Europe, the Middle East, and even in Africa.

The Middle Ages: the Reign of Religion is divided into three eras:

Byzantine, 330 AD—1453 AD: Mosaics (glass, glittering, on walls and ceilings), icons (which were paintings on wood)

Romanesque 1050 AD—1200: magnificent stone cathedrals, carvings, Mosaics (opaque marble cubes, flat, less colorful), illuminated manuscripts, catacomb paintings

Gothic 1200 AD—1500 AD: magnificent soaring cathedrals, stained glass, tapestries, Bayeux Embroidery; artists include Cimabue, Duccio, Giotto, Campin, Van Der Weyden, Van Eyck, Grunewald

Giotto: a watershed moment in the history of painting

Gothic painting is widely regarded as reaching its height in Giotto, who so splendidly subsumed and reinvigorated all that had gone before. For the first time we have in European painting what the historian Michael Levey calls “a great creative personality.”³

Revolution in Art History I

The Renaissance (1420-1600)—a marked departure from the medieval to the modern whose effect was felt not only in art but in societal values, humanism, secularism, science, and exploration. The word means “rebirth” and was considered to be a rebirth of the golden ages of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The emphasis was on the human being rather than on the divine. A major responsibility for the success of this era was the patronage of the Medici family, in addition to that of the Catholic Church.

In regard to painting there were four major achievements that catapulted the art of painting into the form that we identify with the Renaissance masters, and which we still use today. They are:

1. Oil on stretched canvas: more portable ground, and the ability to achieve a much more vivid, vibrant color palette with a rich range of colors. These enabled the painter to simulate depth and three-dimensional forms.
2. Perspective: this scientific discovery enabled the artist to create the illusion of depth on a flat surface. The painter utilized lines that seem to converge in the distance, and also reduced the size of objects to make them appear further away.

³ Beckett, p. 46.

3. Use of light and shadow — modeling the forms on the painting so that the lighter parts seem to emerge from the darker areas, which makes them appear rounded. We call this chiaroscuro.

4. Pyramid construction — a more realistic construction of a picture so that the focal point of the picture has lines leading the eye to it.⁴

Outstanding works from this era include: the Mona Lisa, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the Birth of Venus, the Last Supper, Raphael's Madonnas, and the Arnolfini Wedding.

Artists include: Fra Angelico, Botticelli, Masaccio, Donatello, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian, Tintoretto, El Greco, Holbein, and Durer.

Baroque (1600-1750): the paintings of this era are sumptuous and ornate, exhibiting a sensitivity to and a mastery of light. Some of the subject matter was religious, and some secular. Often painted for kings, but was still sought after for the interiors of churches.

Outstanding works from this era include: The Conversion of St Paul, the Nightwatch, the Descent from the Cross, any Vermeer, Las Meninas, and any portraits by Gainsborough or Reynolds.

Artists include: Rembrandt, Rubens, Caravaggio, Velasquez, Chardin, Van Dyck, Hals, Vermeer, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Hogarth, both Orazio and Artemesia Gentileschi, Reni, Zurburan, and Murillo.

Rococo: this era grew out of Baroque but is characterized by a frothy, superficial quality where all the women tend to look like Royal Dalton figurines.

Major paintings include: Diana Bathing, A Young Girl Reading, the Attentive Nurse, and any Canaletto.

Major artists include: Watteau, Boucher, Fragonard, Tiepolo, Canaletto, and Vigee-Lebrun.

Neo-Classicism (1780-1820): a revival of austere classicism was a reaction against the excesses of the Baroque and Rococo eras of the previous century. It is characterized by order and solemnity, an emphasis on Greek and Roman mythology, and was meant to be uplifting. Emphasis is on lines in the drawings and paintings.

In the U.S. this art movement found favor because it reflected the style and thinking of the founding of the new republic. American artists such as Copley, Stuart, B. West, and Peale imitated this style. Major artists in Europe include David, Ingres, Delacroix, and Gericault.

Major paintings include La Grande Odalisque, the Oath of the Horatii, many portraits by Gainsborough and Reynolds, and the Death of Marat.

⁴ Strickland, p. 32.

Goya fits in here timewise, but defies classification. He is known for his portraits of the Spanish Royal Family, his political paintings such as *The Third of May 1808*, and paintings from his “black era” such as *the Colossus*.

Romanticism: This era was named for its interest in medieval tales called romances, the macabre, and the occult. It is also characterized by nature worship; nature was given heroic overtones.⁵ Emphasis on color and brushwork, observation.

Major paintings include: *the Raft of Medusa*, *Approach to Venice*, *the Death of Sardanapalus*, *the Haywain*, and *Crossing the Brook*.

Major artists include: Gericault, Delacroix, Constable, Turner, and Americans: the Hudson River School, Bierstadt, Moran, and Cole.

Realism: emphasized the precise imitation of visual perceptions without alteration. Realism’s subject matter was also totally different. Artists limited themselves to facts of the modern world as they personally experienced them. “Only what they could see or touch was considered real.”⁶

Major works: *the Gleaners*, *the Painter’s Studio*, *Bonjour Monsieur Courbet*, *Sloop Nassau*, *the Agnew Clinic*, *Arrangement in Gray and Black No. 1.*, and any Singer portrait.

Major artists include: Daumier, Corot, Millet, Courbet, Homer, Eakins, Whistler, and Sargent.

Pre-Raphaelites: British movement to bring painting back to greater truth to nature. Secret brotherhood, emphasis on religious and historical themes.

Major artists include: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, John Millais, Edward Burke-Jones, Whistler, and Leighton.

Major works include: *Ophelia*, *On English Coasts*, *the Day Dream*, and *the Golden Stairs*.

Revolution in Art History II

Impressionism: This was the first total artistic revolution since the Renaissance.⁷ It determined the course of most art that followed. It was characterized by the rejection of balance, perspective, idealized figures, and chiaroscuro. The center of the impressionistic movement was France. The emphasis was on visual sensations through color and light. Other characteristics are choppy brushstrokes, and visible daubs of paint.

⁵ Becket, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

⁶ Strickland, p. 82.

⁷ Strickland, *op. cit.*, p. 96

Major paintings include: Impression Sunrise, Le Dejeuner sur L'Herbe, Rouen Cathedral, Waterlilies, Le Moulin de 12 Galette, Degas's ballerinas, Woman Sewing, The Bar at the Folies-Bergere, and the Boating Party Lunch.

Major Artists include: Manet, Renoir, Monet, Degas, Bazille, Sisley, Pissarro, Morisot, and Cassatt.

American Impressionists include: Sargent, Hassam, Metcalf, Frieseke, Weir, Twachtman, Reid, Metcalf, Benson, Tarbell, Dewing, De Camp, Simmons, and Chase.

Post-Impressionism: outgrowth of Impressionism, but based on what they felt as well as what they saw. Closer to abstraction. Some scientific precision. Post-impressionism employed a startling use of color.

Major Works include: Le Chateau Noir, Starry Night, A Sunday on La Grande Jatte, Mont Sainte-Victoire, Still Life with Apples and Oranges, Large Bathers, Vision after the Sermon: Jacob Wrestling with an Angel, the Artist's Bedroom, Sunflowers, and Quadrille at the Moulin Rouge.

Major artists include: Seurat, Cezanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Toulouse-Lautrec.

Nabis: gentle domesticities

Major Works: The Reader and Stairs in the Artist's Garden.

Major artists: Bonnard and Vuillard.

Revolution in Art History III

Twentieth Century

Matisse and Picasso are opposites, the North and South Pole of art. Matisse has his emphasis on color, while Picasso's is on Cubism.

Fauves: First avant-garde art movement of the 20th century. It is characterized by a total disregard for reality in color, and the refusal to imitate nature.⁸

Major Works: Big Ben, the Conversation, Regatta at Cowes, paper cut outs, the Green Stripe, and Odalisque with Raised Arms.

Artists include: Matisse, Dufy, Braque, Vlaminck, and Derain.

Expressionism: centered in Germany, heightened symbolic colors and exaggerated imagery, expresses feelings.⁹

⁸ Strickland, *op. cit.*, p 130.

⁹ Becket, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

Major Works: Prostitute in Her Mirror, Berlin Street Scene, and Early Evening.

Major artists include: Rouault, Kirchner, Klimt, and Beckmann.

Cubism: God's eye view of reality, seeing every aspect of the subject simultaneously, broken into facets.

Major Works: Family of Saltimbanques, Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, the Lovers, Nude in a Red Armchair, and Guernica.

Major artists include: Picasso and Braque.

Other art movements of the 20th century include:

Artistic Emigres: Chagall, Modigliani, and Soutine. Three Jewish artists who went to Paris. Their art defies classification.

Abstraction: Kandinsky, Marc, Klee, and Mondrian. Non-representational art.

Surreal: Rousseau, Magritte, Miro, Dali, Dubuffet, and O'Keefe.

Abstract Expressionism: Pollack and deKooning.

Pop Art: Warhol and Lichtenstein.

Minimalism: Stella and Christo.

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Chapter 2

Brief Summation of Figure as Subject in Western Art

Prior to the 16th century much of painting concerned itself with the depiction of religious subject matter. The goal was to instruct an illiterate population on the legends, narratives, and mores of Christianity; most often these were found in the church or cathedral setting. Many human figures were painted, but the emphasis was on God, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the pantheon of saints. Biblical stories were elaborated in paint—on the walls of the churches, in the stained glass windows, and later on canvases. These were intended to inspire, to instruct, and to invoke fear of eternal punishment.

In the Middle Ages artistic expression had concentrated almost exclusively on a celebration of the Divine and man's relationship with God; now with the Renaissance man himself was the center of the universe and the portrait became the natural expression in artistic terms of this new emphasis.¹⁰

The Renaissance brought new emphasis on the individual, and the portrait was its natural outgrowth. Initially royalty and nobility were those depicted in the portraits of the day; these were commissioned so that public figures could demonstrate their social standing and in a way, buy a bit of immortality, as a portrait would easily outlive its subject. It was only a matter of time before wealthy merchants and other middle class and bourgeois sought to have themselves similarly immortalized.

Earliest portraits were somewhat primitive to our eye and were often profiles (King John the Good, 1360—Anon); the portraits then evolved into kind of an idealized, heroic representation of the subject, portraying the “ideal” prince or priest or even the “ideal wife”.

The actual appearance of a living prince was therefore less important than the political and social institution within whose tradition he wished, or demanded, to be seen.

Early ruler portraits are often more concerned with depicting the office of kingship than the face of a particular king. Resemblance may be ignored.¹¹

Somewhat later, but still in the 15th century, these idealized portraits were followed, especially in the Netherlands, by very realistic representations of the subject “with an almost microscopic attention to detail, on the rendering of external reality...”¹²

¹⁰ *The Art of Portraits*. Dore, Helen. Great Britain: Parragon Book Service, Ltd., 1994, p. 5.

¹¹ *Understanding Paintings*. Sturgis, Alexander and Hollis Clayson, ed. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2000, p. 136.

¹² Schneider, *op cit.*, p. 6.

The Renaissance brought about the concept of “identity” and “the individual” and recognition of oneself by fellow individuals became significant in everyday life. Portraits became another method for affirming one’s identity and individualism. This necessitated “faithful pictorial imitation of reality.”¹³

Ultimately the portrait metamorphosed into something less realistic but more flattering. The artist sought to emphasize the subject’s general character and spiritual qualities, that is to say, “his essential being.” An exact pictorial representation of him was less important.

Earlier portraits relied on a language that emphasized the status of the sitters. By contrast portraitists in the 19th century increasingly sought ways of expressing the inner essence, the character and personality of their subjects. But how might the essence best be expressed? Some artists emphasized physiognomy—the physical makeup of the head and face—as the key to the personality within. Others focused on more transitory aspects of appearance such as facial expression and body language. Character might be expressed as well through a sitters environment, the settings and attributes that suggest the activities, the habits and rhythms of everyday life.¹⁴

A portrait might be described as an image in which the artist’s main concern is to characterize the sitter as an individual. While some portraits restrict themselves to the description of physical appearance, most attempt rather more, conveying the sitter’s status in the world, or characterizing their personality, or at least their state of mind at the time of the portrait.¹⁵

One must take care in interpreting the characters of the subjects of portraits; artifices employed several hundred years ago may elicit a different response from today’s viewer than that intended by the artist and the sitter.

The artist employed other devices to tell the viewer something about the sitter. One of the most important was the setting, which could either be landscapes or interiors. The landscape occasionally referred to the actual place where the sitter lived or worked, but it could also imply his position in public life. The sitter rendered in an interior often tells us something about his private life and perhaps about his values. “Books symbolized knowledge”¹⁶ and instruments such as globes or telescopes might indicate either an interest in technology or an interest in faraway places. Some symbols employed make allusion to the sitters’ ethical beliefs or notions of virtue,¹⁷ especially in portraits of women.

¹³ Schneider, *op cit.*, p. 15.

¹⁴ *Faces of Impressionism*. Johnston, Sona. New York: Rizzoli International Publications and the Baltimore Museum of Art, 1999, p. 13.

¹⁵ Sturgis and Clayson, *op cit.*, p. 137.

¹⁶ Schneider, *op cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

All portraits were intended to impress. They sought to command respect for the authority of the sitter, however extended or limited the scope of his influence might be.¹⁸

The Enlightenment radically reordered thinking about society, equality, and the natural goodness of the common man. Two readily identifiable effects of this radical shift in philosophy were the American Revolution and the French Revolution. Portraits of the time reflected this change of character of society. One notable example is the well-known portrait of Paul Revere by John Singleton Copley. Revere is pictured at work at his occupation, silversmithing, dressed in his shirtsleeves, his tools in plain sight. He holds the results of his labor in his hands and regards us with an uncompromising gaze. This was revolutionary at a time “when a portrait never pictured manual labor.”¹⁹

In the nineteenth century there was another radical change in the world of painting—which we have come to know as Impressionism. Wishing to get away from portraying an individual and his status because of birth or achievement the Impressionists utilized transitory phenomena to define sitters personalities.²⁰ They nevertheless employed the traditional use of setting to tell something about the character of the sitter, once more, with the men shown in public venues and the women in domestic settings.

“Two types of male public identity emerge in Impressionist portraiture: the celebrated individual and the man-about-town, the *flâneur*.”²¹ These men are often portrayed as if caught in action, involved in whatever it is that makes them important, and body language and gesture are all important.²² The *flâneur* was almost always depicted in the city streets, strolling about and surveying his whereabouts and his fellow human beings. An additional sphere for the male was the workplace; Degas is specially noted for this depiction in his paintings. And of course, the Impressionists are famous for painting one another, more often than not in the act of painting which for them is also the workplace. Additionally, many of their self-portraits also depict them engaged in their profession.

Women, by contrast, are almost always shown in household settings. (The possible exceptions are the Impressionists paintings of actresses, opera signers, and ballet dancers.) “Female figures are preponderantly shown engaged in standard domestic activities such as reading, sewing, piano-playing”²³ or caring for children or perhaps strolling in a garden.

Eventually there was:

an increasing emphasis on the portrait as an expressive vehicle for the artist’s own personality. It intensified the pressure on the artist to penetrate surface appearances and reveal the sitter’s essence; at the same time it was argued that

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁹ Strickland, p. 73.

²⁰ Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

the true portraitist—unlike the operator of a mechanical device such as a camera—should express something fundamental about himself in his portraiture.²⁴

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²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Chapter 3

Discussion of Portrait vs. Genre Painting

Genre paintings are most readily described as those artworks “depicting scenes from daily life.”²⁵ This term was used to describe works which dealt with subjects considered to be lower on the hierarchy of artistic themes (of lesser importance than history, religion, or mythology).²⁶ In the 17th century, especially in the Netherlands, emphasis turned away from religious themes (perhaps because of the Protestant Reformation and its abhorrence of religious icons) and concentrated more upon the common man. Nevertheless, there was still a desire to use art to teach lessons of morality.

“If examples of heroic behavior or great deeds were depicted, it was thought that the viewing public would be morally elevated, inspired by the scenes of courage, selflessness, and suffering before them.”²⁷

Many times it was the poor who were depicted; the artist’s goal was to evoke one’s sympathy and to inspire the onlooker to be charitable, as prescribed by the Church. The peasants may have been portrayed as either noble and long-suffering or as depraved and foolish. In either case true reality was not employed as these pictures were meant for enjoyment as well as for meditative or moral purposes.²⁸ However, in a genre painting the characters depicted are generic types: the mother, the governess, the laborer.²⁹

An amazingly large number of paintings depict the embroiderer—the subject of this thesis. Some of these are portraits; some are genre paintings. So how does one know into which category to place the particular artwork? Here is an easy way to tell the difference, although caution must be taken: these distinctions do not apply universally.

Generally speaking portraits can be identified by the following characteristics:

1. the subject is a specific person known to us
2. the painting was commissioned
3. the features of the face are distinct
4. the eyes of the sitter meet those of the observer

Genre paintings are thus identified:

1. the subject is a “type” or “everyman”
2. the painting was probably not commissioned

²⁵ Beckett, p. 390.

²⁶ Sturgis and Clayson, p. 194.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 197

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

3. the features of the faces are indeterminate
4. the eyes of the sitter are most likely averted

Genre paintings were popular in the Netherlands in the 17th century with a prosperous bourgeoisie providing a ready market for such artwork. Likewise, genre paintings were common in 17th and 18th century England.

Women's domestic abilities were considered extremely important by the middle class, so many moralizing genre scenes depict women absorbed in household tasks. These women are shown devoted to duty and caring for their work, the implication being that those looking at the painting should do the same.³⁰

In the dénouement of the American and French Revolutions acknowledgement was given to the inherent dignity of the common man. Perhaps this made their activities a more worthy subject for the painting. In any event, the revolutionary tide in art in the nineteenth century, Impressionism, produced an impressive number of paintings which could be classified as "genre paintings."

However, "Among the Impressionists the distinctions between portraits and genre paintings became quite blurred ...as a result of the experiments that the painters themselves were making."³¹

Often in Impressionist paintings the men included in a painting were identifiable and could be considered "portraits"; however the women were more often "types." Was this to perhaps cloak them in anonymity to preserve their good names? The Impressionists also were experimenting with momentary "impressions" or "glimpses" of reality and this too may have contributed to the lack of identity of their sitters. Were they also making political or social statements regarding the loss of identity in an industrial age where man was becoming a faceless cypher?

In standard artistic theory of the 19th century the distinction between portraiture and genre painting was unproblematic. Portraiture depicted individuals as individuals, while the figures in genre paintings were typical, involved in generic activities, and situations.³²

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

³¹ Johnston, p. 29

³² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Books used to research this chapter

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Chapter 4

The Embroiderer as Depicted by the Impressionists

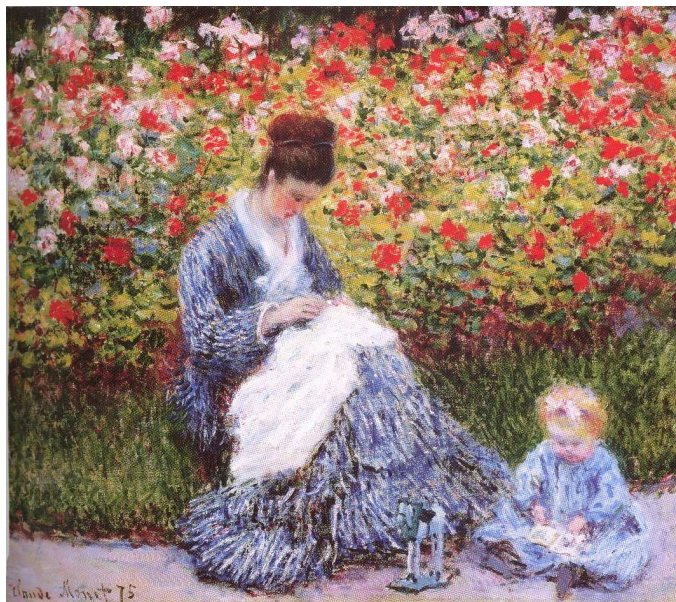
A Revolution in Style and Subject Matter

In my early searches for paintings which depicted embroiderers—or anyone doing any kind of related needlework—I immediately encountered numerous images by the Impressionists. This is not surprising; the Impressionists are immensely popular in America and their works are commonly reproduced on calendars, journals, address books, note paper, mugs, mouse pads, and tee shirts! So finding some paintings of women stitching was easy, especially if one searched among the Impressionists.

“With the exception of Sisley all the Impressionists painted portraits, sometimes as testimonies of friendships and allegiances, but just as often as commercial transactions, in exchange for ready money.”³³

A. Claude Monet

Probably the best known Impressionist is Claude Monet who is highly regarded for his landscapes. Nevertheless, he did paint some portraits and some genre paintings. His favorite model, in the early years at least, was his wife Camille, who tragically died at the age of 32. Monet did many images of her, but my research has only revealed two that show her sewing or embroidering. One often-reproduced image is likewise one of the most popular paintings in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. It is **Camille Monet and a Child in the Artist's Garden in Argenteuil**. Camille herself is pictured sitting in a garden ablaze with pink and red flowers. She is sewing something white (perhaps a child's garment?) and is dressed in a daytime dress of a woman who lives in town. She is accompanied by a child, whom we know not to be her own son; this child is probably a model. The complementary colors of the background are most arresting; Camille and the child are rendered in vibrant blue which contrasts greatly with and sets them apart from the busy background.

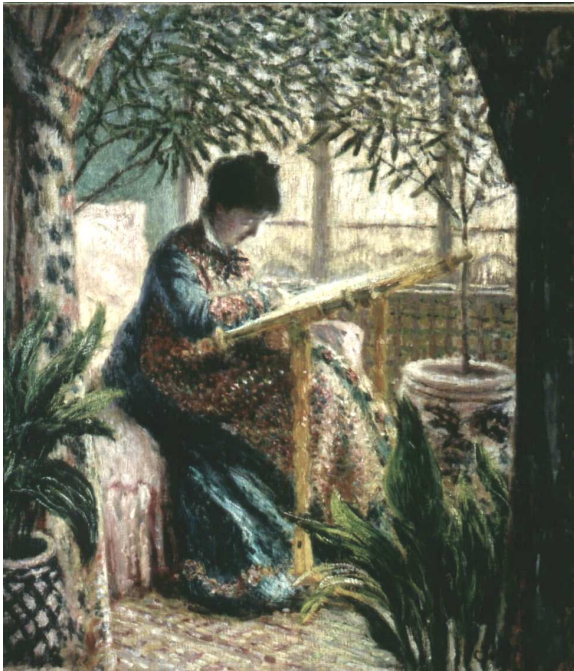


Claude Monet. *Camille Monet and a Child in the Artist's Garden in Argenteuil*, 1875. Oil on Canvas 55.3 x 64.7 cm. Anonymous gift in memory of Mr. and Mrs Edwin S. Webster. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 1976.833.

³³*Renoir's Portraits*. Bailey, Colin B. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 1.

“Monet has moved his seamstress outdoors to his garden at Argenteuil, adapting the traditional image of female industry and domesticity to *plein air* painting.”³⁴

It is probably no accident that Camille is robed in blue; this painting can be seen as making allusions to the Virgin, with Camille’s obvious diligence, the presence of the child, and the background of flowers. Furthermore, this painting has all the characteristics of the consummate Impressionist painting: the flickering brushstrokes, the dazzling use of colors, and the bourgeois subject matter.



The second of the Monet paintings which depicts a needlewoman is called **Camille au Métier**. Here we find Camille at her needlework indoors. She is richly garbed in a fashionable gown of the era, and the setting, a sunny alcove with potted palms, appears to be very elegant. Camille is working, not on garment construction or mending—as can be construed from the other painting of her—but she sits before a needlework frame and is most likely working on something decorative for her home. This is no middle class housewife mending in the garden; this is a well-to-do woman pursuing her artistic endeavors. “... The subject more likely appealed to Monet because of its analogy to painting.”³⁵

Camille à sa Métier (Mme. Monet Embroidering), 1875; Claude Monet. Oil on canvas 65 x 55 cm, The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia

³⁴*Impressionist Portraits*. Melissa McQuillan, Melissa. London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1986, p .102.

³⁵ *Great French Paintings from the Barnes Foundation*. Mofett, Charles S., et al. New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1993, p. 96.

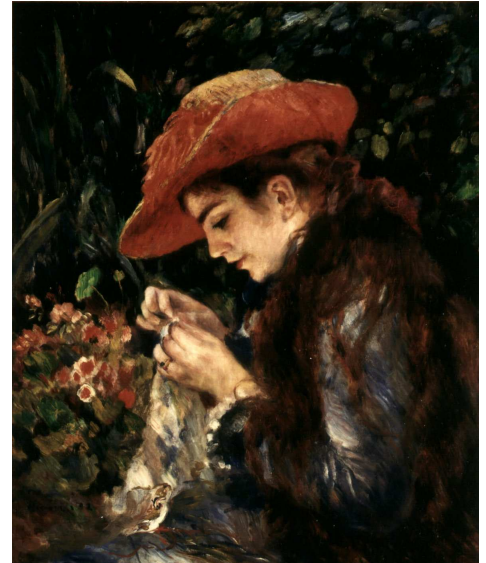
B. Pierre Auguste Renoir

The other great Impressionist is Pierre Auguste Renoir who is widely known as a portrait artist and leaves a vast body of work depicting all levels of society, both genders, and numerous children. Renoir is also known for his nudes.

“... Renoir was the only Impressionist to achieve financial security through the practice of portraiture, as well as being the (Impressionist) movement’s preeminent figure painter ...”³⁶

Many of Renoir’s portraits depict the embroidress; others are genre paintings which show people engaged in the needlearts; still others show figures engaged in questionable activities—is she sewing or is she just holding some textile in her hands?

One immensely popular “embroidery portrait” by Renoir is **Marie-Therese Durand-Ruel Sewing**. This commanding, attractive portrait was painted for Paul Durand-Ruel, a famous French art dealer of the late nineteenth century, who patronized the Impressionists when no one else would. He is considered instrumental in their success and popularity. Renoir painted this portrait of Marie-Therese when she was but 14, and it is said that Durand-Ruel did not like the painting.



Marie-Thérèse Durand-Ruel Sewing, 1882; Pierre Auguste Renoir. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, 1955.613

His daughter is pictured in a sheltered garden and she is intent on her embroidery.

“Here Marie-Therese Durand-Ruel scrutinizes her needlework, which all girls from good bourgeois families were expected to practice and perfect.”³⁷

Mlle Durand-Ruel is pictured wearing a fashionable red hat which dominates the painting at first glance. Her long brown hair cascades over her shoulders and she is clothed in a blue dress with lace at collar and cuffs. The model herself is painted with minute attention given to her features, more in tune with paintings of the earlier nineteenth century. The background is a myriad of flowers and foliage; nevertheless Marie-Therese stands out from this complicated background primarily because her features are so well delineated.

Marie-Therese’s sewing suggests neither dalliance nor excessive virtuousness. Indeed, so involved in her needlework is the sitter that she seems unlikely to

³⁶ Bailey, *op cit.*, p. 3.

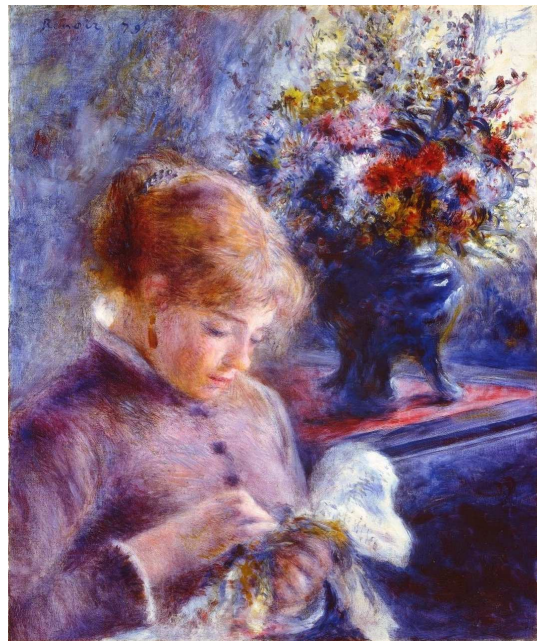
³⁷ *A Passion for Renoir*: Clark, Sterling and Francine collect. 1916 – 1951 Steven Kern and others. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997, p. 41.

suffer the hysteria that Freud attributed to the “dispositional hypnoid state” induced by constant daydreaming to which young women embroidering were especially prone.³⁸

Another of Renoir’s embroidery portraits is entitled **Christine Lerolle Embroidering** (1897, Columbus [Ohio] Museum of Art). Mlle LeRolle was the daughter of a wealthy salon painter named Henry Lerolle who was an avid collector of Renoir’s work. However it is thought that he never owned, nor did he commission this painting of his daughter. Christine is shown diligently at work on her embroidery. She is clothed in a rich red gown which complements her striking brunette hair. The painting itself is suffused with reddish tones reflecting from the gown; the chair, the rug, and even her face and hair repeat the hue. The background shows two men looking at a painting on a wall in a hallway behind Christine. One is most likely M. Lerolle and the other is speculated to be a contemporary Belgian sculptor.³⁹

Children’s Afternoon at Wargemont was an ambitious painting done for a commission by Paul Berard, one of Renoir’s clients. It is a large canvas and depicts the three Berard daughters at their country home. The oldest daughter is painted engrossed in her needlework, in spite of the demand for attention from her littlest sister who has placed a doll on her lap. The third sister is across the room quietly reading. The strong blues contrast with the yellow, ochres, and golds of the surroundings and evoke a feeling of Provence. The painting also alludes to the expectations for well-reared young ladies of the time: both older sisters are shown composed and tranquil, able to read, and accomplished at needlework.

Young Woman Sewing. 1879, Art Institute of Chicago. A young woman, anonymous to us, is depicted intently engaged in her sewing. Her dress is that of respectable middle class with its high-buttoned neckline embellished with a bit of white lace. Her hair, a lovely dark blond which contrasts well with its complement, a greyed-out tone of violet, is arranged simply, although it is adorned with some kind of hair ornament which appears to be silver. The model also wears earrings. To the right of her head an intensely blue footed bowl holds an elaborate and very colorful bouquet of flowers; these are rendered in mostly primary colors. The vase sits on a blue cabinet with an intense red top surface. Our eyes are drawn to the embroidery by the intensely white fabric the embroiderer holds in her hands. Even the white details of collar and cuff seem to point our eyes to the sewing.



Young Woman Sewing, 1879; Pierre Auguste Renoir. Oil on canvas 61.5 x 50.3 cm, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Larned Coburn Memorial Collection, 1933.452 © Art Institute of Chicago, All Rights Reserved

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

³⁹ Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

By the Seashore. 1883, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. This is a very appealing image of a young woman—possibly Aline, although the hair seems a bit dark—sitting in profile in a chair at the seashore. She is garbed in an intense dark blue which echoes the blue of the ocean and of the rocks of the cliffs. The chair and some of the foliage are in tones of yellow, once again evoking the colors of Provence. The model regards us with a direct gaze but holds in her hand something that seems to be crocheting. Closer inspection reveals that she does indeed have a crochet hook in her hand



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *By the Seashore*. Oil on Canvas 92.1 x 72.4 cm 1883. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, H.O Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H.O Havemeyer 1929 (29.100.125.) All Rights Reserved.

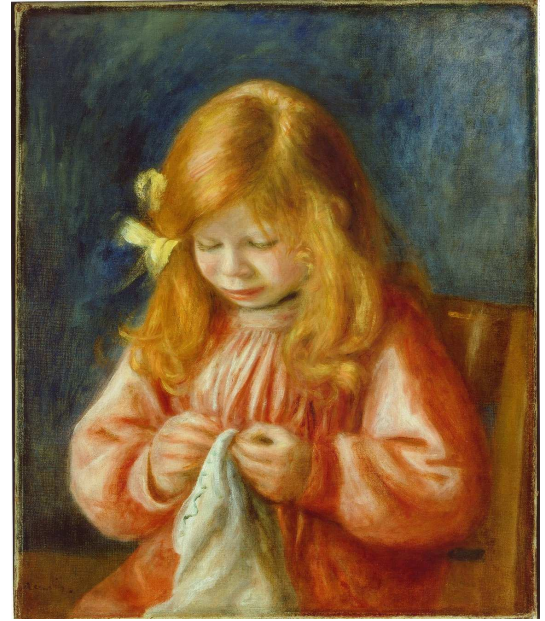
La Modiste. Sammlung Oskar Reinhart “Am” Romerholz, Winterthur, Switzerland. This is an uncomplicated genre painting depicting a young, probably working class, woman (if one is to judge by the title). Her blond hair seems to radiate a yellow glow. She sews on a blue garment with intense concentration; she is not disturbed at her work and seems oblivious of the viewer’s presence. The setting is enhanced by green flowered wallpaper, which serves to create an analogous color scheme.

A Girl Crocheting (Jeune Femme Cousant). c. 1875, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA. Renoir painted a number of works depicting a young woman in innocently provocative poses. Here the young woman is garbed in simple clothes, a skirt and a chemise which is half slipping off her shoulder. Her beautiful long blond hair cascades down her back. The model is intent on her crochet and oblivious of the voyeurs who might catch her in this state of semi-deshabille.

“Though the sight of Nini passing time between sessions may have inspired *A Girl Crocheting*, Renoir removes any evidence of the painter’s studio ...”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Kern, et. al., *op cit.*, p. 42.

The Artist's Son Jean. 1900, Art Institute of Chicago, IL. This charming painting of the 5 or 6 year old Jean Renoir is unique in that it is the only male child stitcher I have discovered. Renoir painted many pictures of his children, particularly this child who must have demanded much time and attention of his parents and his nanny. He is otherwise portrayed playing with toy soldiers, finger painting, playing with blocks, reading and engaged in many other activities. In this painting Jean is pictured sewing on some white fabric. He is clad in a light red smock and his glorious golden hair is tied back with a yellow bow. I always thought the Renoirs were abiding by the notion that parents should disguise a male heir as a girl so he would not be the target of evildoers. Alternatively perhaps they could just not bear to cut his glorious red-gold hair. But in Jean Renoir's biography of his Father he notes that his father was convinced that hair was there to protect the delicate heads of children and should be allowed to grow long for that reason. Jean Renoir grew up to become a famous French film director.



Jean Renoir Sewing, c. 1899; Pierre Auguste Renoir. Oil on canvas, 55.9 x 46.6 cm, Mr. and Mrs. Martin A Ryerson Collection, 1937.1027 ©The Art Institute of Chicago, All Rights Reserved

Child Sewing. 1906, charcoal, Houston, TX. This appears to be a charcoal study for the painting above, except that it is dated 1906. The child wears a similar smock and his hair is tied up with a similar bow. Could it perhaps be the younger brother Coco?

The following two paintings by Renoir seem to depict someone sewing, although it is not obvious either by detail or by the titles of the paintings. However, the classic pose of the model with her hands raised just below the level of her bosom, and her head inclined slightly forward makes it likely that Renoir's wife Aline is indeed engaged in some sort of needlework.

Garden Scene in Brittany (Scène de Jardin en Bretagne). 1886, the Barnes Foundation, Merion PA. In this painting Aline sits on a bench in a sunny garden alongside the Renoir's rented home. A neighbor stops by to exchange pleasantries, and the toddler Pierre stands at his mother's side with his hand on her knee. Aline appears to have knitting in her hands; a close inspection of the details seems to confirm this.

"Here Aline sits on a wooden bench, sewing in the sunny garden of the Brittany house."⁴¹

The Apple Seller. 1890 , The Cleveland Museum of Art, OH. This painting also depicts Aline in a rustic scene. She is accompanied by two children, the one most to the right is probably Pierre. In her hands Aline appears to have some needlework; it seems unlikely that it would be a napkin or handkerchief. This appears to be sewing rather than knitting. Perhaps she is one who did not like to have her hands idle.

⁴¹ Moffett et al., *op cit.*, p. 66.

C. Mary Cassatt

Mary Cassatt is probably the best known woman Impressionist. Although an American, born to a well-to-do Philadelphia family, she painted in Paris and studied and exhibited with the other great Impressionists. She is best known for her mother and child painting. Other works depict genteel upper class pastimes and almost always include women and children.

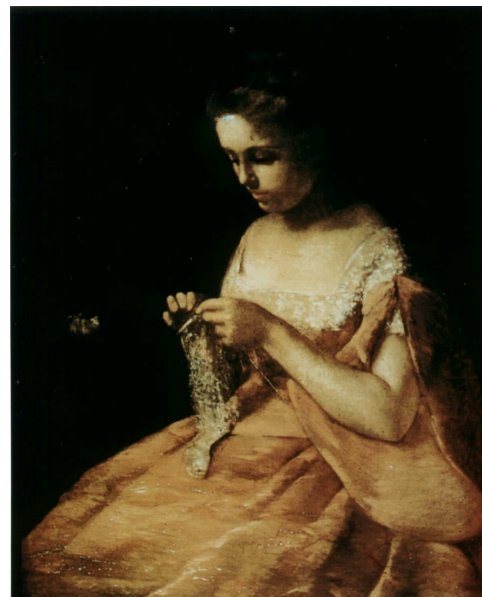
“More usual feminine activities such as crocheting, as seen in *Lydia Crocheting in the Garden at Marly*, or needlework, as in *Lydia at her Tapestry Frame* ... form the major part of Cassatt’s work from the mid 1870-’s to the mid-1880’s.”⁴²

This was the Victorian era and a well-bred woman, even an artist, would not spend time with men to whom she was not related. Other than her father and her brother Cassatt only produced three portraits of men. However she provides us with a wealth of paintings which show women engaged in the needlearts.

The Young Bride. 1875, Montclair Art Museum, NJ. This lovely painting is of a young woman servant of another woman artist. Indeed Mary Cassatt gave the painting to the bride as a wedding gift.⁴³ The model has the youthful glow of one in love; however she is not exceptionally beautiful or glamorous. Her flowing gown is a light red with a neckline made more modest by a piece of lace; a bit of it peeps through her sleeves as well. The lace is reiterated in the stocking she knits—which will no doubt be worn at her wedding. The only other thing depicted in the painting is the ball of yarn, which almost appears to hang in space.

Mary Ellison Embroidering. 1877, Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA. Mary Ellison is depicted as an upper middle class woman, well dressed with a beautiful, wide lace collar woven with ribbon. She sits on a rich red sofa and holds in her hand embroidery that seems floral in nature. Her eyes meet ours, but not in a challenging way. It is only as if she has been interrupted at her work.

Femme Cousante. c. 1880-82, Musée d’Orsay, Paris. Here Cassatt has pictured a young woman clad in a pale blue gown of some diaphanous fabric. She is intent on her sewing and does not give the viewer a glance. Although her pose is relaxed the chair does not look



La Jeune Mariée, c. 1868-69; Mary Cassatt. Oil on canvas 34-3/4 in x 27-1/2 in., Montclair Art Museum, Montclair NJ. Gift of the Max Kade Foundation, 1958.¹

⁴² *Mary Cassatt*. Constantino, Maria. Greenwich, CT: Brompton Books Corp. for Barnes & Noble, 1995, p. 9.

⁴³ *Mary Cassatt Paintings and Prints*. Getlein, Frank. New York: Abbeville Press, 1980, p. 14.

comfortable. Behind her is green foliage with some red flowers—a complementary color scheme of similar value which allows the subject to spring forward visually.

Girl in Green, a.k.a. Françoise in Green Sewing. 1908, St. Louis Art Museum, MO. Here a very young girl sits engrossed in her embroidery. She wears an eye-catching wide, ruffled green striped skirt which dominates the painting. Her blouse is white and flowing. She sits in an elegant chair and behind her we get a glimpse of another room, complete with fireplace and stove. The green of the curtain behind Françoise reiterates the green of the dress, but a touch of red ribbon acts as a complement.

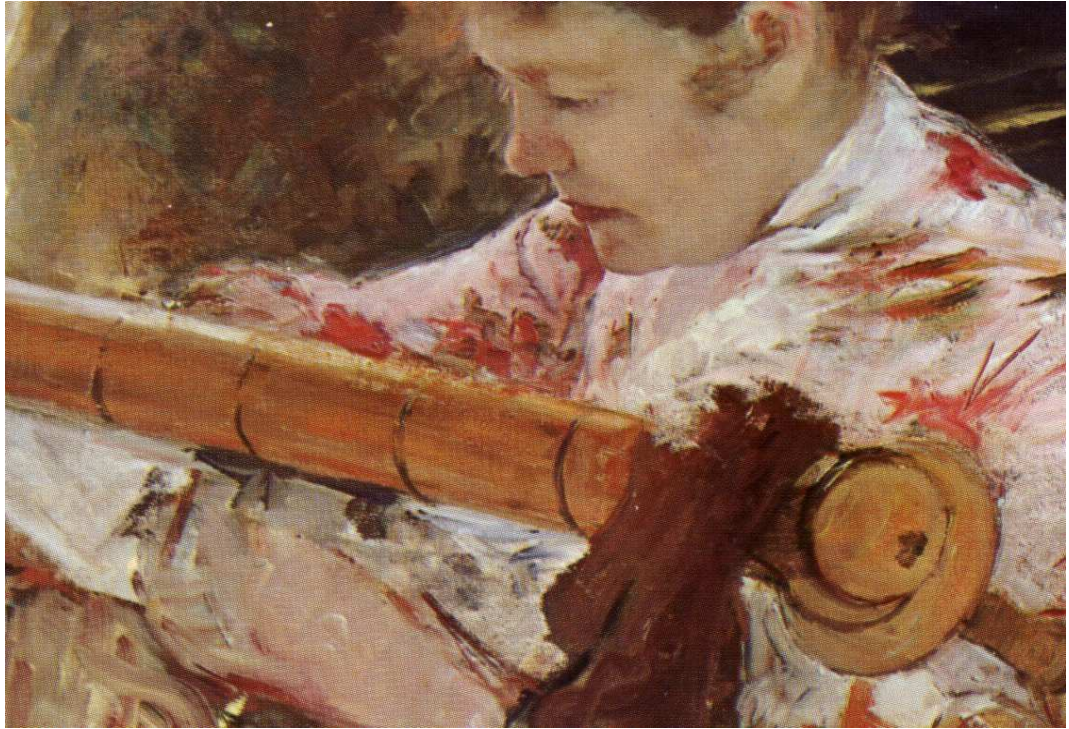
Young Woman Sewing. 1890, Art Institute of Chicago, IL. In this painting a young woman is adorned with a striking black hat, and her black scarf repeats the theme. Emphasis is on the hands of the model and all lines seem to point toward these busy hands.

The focal center of the painting is exactly where it ought to be, on those busy, well-trained fingers going about a piece of work that they are quite competent to do, but that nevertheless demands the attention it is getting. Perhaps Cassatt saw in this quiet domestic act an analogy to her own use of her hands to create something new out of cloth, the linen of her canvas.⁴⁴

Mrs. Cassatt Knitting. Philadelphia Museum of Art. This is a sketch of Mary Cassatt's mother. She is pictured in profile knitting industriously, but seeming to glance up at someone with whom she is conversing. Once again emphasis is on the hands, with light falling on them, and the lines of Mrs. Cassatt's collar and profile directing the eye to her hands.

Young Mother Sewing. 1902, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. This is a lovely double portrait of a woman and her young daughter. The mother concentrates on her sewing while the child intently regards the viewer. The background is unusual for Cassatt in that it involves a bit of landscape, but we are made aware of the interior by the addition of a vase of flowers to the right of the mother. Her black and white striped gown direct one's eyes to the child whose features are more distinct than those of the mother.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72.



Lydia at her Tapestry Frame, Mary Cassatt. Ca 1881, oil on canvas 55.5 x 92 cm., Flint Institute of Art, 676.32. Gift of the Whiting Foundation.

Lydia at her Tapestry Frame. 1881, Flint Institute of Art, MI. Lydia was Mary Cassatt's sister who accompanied her to France, and who died tragically in 1882 at a young age. Mary was devoted to this sister, and even suspended her painting to care for her in her final illness. In this painting Lydia's head dominates the design, but it is balanced by a strong diagonal line from left to the center of the painting. The features of Lydia's face are distinct, but her hands are not, thus emphasizing her identity, rather than her activity. Nevertheless we can identify that Lydia was pursuing her own artistic interests because of her use of a needlework frame. Lydia is a familiar subject of Mary's work and is almost always pictured as a busy person, in spite of her illness.

Lydia Crocheting in the Garden at Marly. 1880, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. Lydia is pictured here in a richly decorated gown which contrasts greatly with her pale face and frail looking hands. Her face is protected by a lace bonnet and she seems sad and fragile. In spite of that there is a rich tapestry of flowers and garden behind her, and once more our eyes focus on her hands which are busy with crocheting what appears to be black lace.

Lydia Seated on a Terrace Crocheting. 1881-82, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hermanowski (no slide). Here Lydia sits at one side of the composition overlooking a pool of water and some houses. Her dress is white and she wears the same hat as in the Marly painting above. The dark green of the wrought iron bench attracts the eye and makes the viewer realize that there is a figure in this landscape. As usual Lydia's hands are busy, this time with what appears to be crocheting, if we are to believe the title of the painting.

D. Berthe Morisot

Berthe Morisot was the second great woman Impressionist and moved quite freely in those upper middle class social circles. She married Eugène Manet, the painter Manet's younger brother. She figures largely in some of Manet's paintings. Like her colleague Mary Cassatt, Berthe Morisot was somewhat limited in her contact with other classes of society and so her paintings concentrate on women and children and indoor scenes. Her technique is looser than many of her contemporaries. I have identified six paintings by Morisot that depict sewing and/or embroidery.

The Artist's Daughter Julie with her Nanny (a.k.a. the Sewing Lesson). 1885, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN. This painting pictures Julie Manet as a child who is being taught to sew by her Nanny. The nanny wears a dark blue dress with a high collar and her dark blond hair is arranged simply. The child's hair color echoes that of the nanny. Julie's dress is a dark blue green. Both figures gaze intently at the embroidery and their facial features are indistinct. The embroidery is in the center of the painting and a strong vertical line in the background directs our eyes to it. The hands of the models are barely discernible. The background shows a neighborhood scene.

Young Woman Knitting. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. Morisot used light values of color with her bravura brushstroking to create this painting. A woman is pictured seated on a garden path; above her almost half of the picture is composed of a swath of green lawn, broken up with a few roses. An additional chair is empty; both chairs are elegant, gold colored, and delicate. The model has on her lap a red basket which draws our attention to her activity, and this color is echoed in the hatband the model wears. Her hands are caught in the pose of one knitting, her head tilts forward in the characteristic attitude of one engaged in handwork.

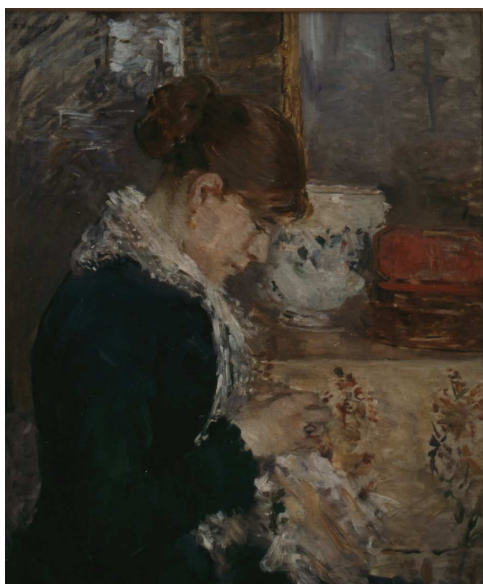
Les Lilas a Maurecourt. 1874, collection particuliere. Green is the predominant color of this painting, although it is relieved by a yellow basket, a yellow umbrella and hat, and some yellow flowers in the background. The subjects of the painting are Morisot's sister Edma and Edma's two daughters Jeanne and Blanche. Edma is dressed in a long black dress and her creamy hat is trimmed with the same color. The two children are garbed in neutral tones, although the one closest to her mother is more pronounced because of her dark hair. All eyes focus on the needlework, and a large tree embraces the family grouping.

“...*Les Lilas à Maurecourt* datent de cette période heureuse où Berthe Morisot a trouvé son style qui s'exprime par une extrême délicatesse de touches et une brosse rapide.”⁴⁵ (*The Lilacs at Maurecourt* dated from this happy time when Berthe Morisot found her own style which was expressed by a highly delicate touch and rapid brushstrokes.)

⁴⁵ *Les Femmes Impressionnistes*. Delafond, Marianne and Marie-Caroline Sainsaulieu. Paris: La Bibliothèque des Arts, 1993, p. 150.

Pasie Cousant dans le Jardin de Bougival. 1881, Musée de Beaux Arts, Pau. This painting is rendered in an analogous color scheme of greens, blues, and violets. Only a bit of subdued red fabric in the sewing basket serves as a complement. The model sits on a blue bench passing the time with her embroidery. The embroidery itself is front and center in the composition and the white color of it is reiterated in the white roses that proliferate in the background. The model's face is fairly well defined and typically the slant of her head is toward the sewing.

Young Woman Sewing in the Garden. 1884. In this painting the emphasis is on Morisot's delicate brushstroking; it's almost as if one notices the painting before the subject matter. A woman sits in a wooded setting on a campstool and leans against a tree. This tree strongly divides the painting in half, with the woman (probably Morisot's sister) on the left, and the child on the right. Light filters in to brighten the mood. The woman wears a dark red-violet gown which stands out from the landscape, but the child almost is lost in the foliage. The basket on the ground serves to connect them, in spite of the strong division created by the tree.



Woman Sewing ca. 1879; Berthe Morisot.
Oil on canvas, unframed 65.4 x 54.61 cm,
Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, NY.
Fellows for Life Fund, 1926.

Woman Sewing. 1879, Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY. This interior scene shows off a well-to-do bourgeois home but the focus is on the embroiderer. Her dress is an elegant blue-black with a voluminous white lace fichu. Her hair is arranged in the style of the day, caught up in a generous chignon. To complement the strong color of the dress the other elements are a pale creamy yellow, with a highly decorated table cloth upon which rests a large china bowl and a copper pot containing something red (is this perhaps the inside of the top of the copper pot?) These appear to be in front of a mirror. The model wears a conspicuous ring which also serves to draw attention to the fact that she is sewing, as does the characteristic tilt of her head.

E. Pissarro

Another well known Impressionist was Camille Pissarro who was born in the Virgin Islands and had a background which included Portuguese, French, Haitian, and Jewish. He left the Caribbean for France in order to go beyond elementary school and there pursued studies of art. He is more known for his landscapes than his portraits; nevertheless, there are several genre paintings and a few that might be considered portraits which include models who are sewing.

Portrait of Mme Pissarro Sewing Near a Window. 1878-79, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Pissarro has painted his wife Julie Vellay seated in front of a window with grillwork arabesques. She is bent over her stitching, although we can barely discern what she is working on. The light from the window bathes her face with a salmon pink color, which is reflected and

repeated in her hands. “Mme Pissarro is sewing. This not only follows pictorial convention but also probably arises from real domestic necessity.”⁴⁶

Young Girl Knitting. 1879, University of Michigan Museum of Art. The tones of this painting are somber indeed. The model wears a dark grey dress highlighted with blue and some pale yellow tones. The background walls are a dark ochre. And a table is covered with a dull red cloth. The bright spots in the painting are the model’s cap which is white, and the red knitting which she holds in her hands. The knitting needles are clearly visible, leaving no doubt what her activity is. All attention in this painting is pointed at the knitting. However we later become aware of items in the background: a lamp with a green shade, a candle, a plant, a fireplace, and a Japanese fan hanging on the wall.

The Seamstress. 1881, Giraudon. Pissarro eschewed the bourgeois subjects to paint peasants and to stress the nobility of their work. Here he has depicted a peasant woman busy at her needlework. One might think that this indicates oppression of the poor, but the model sits peacefully in her rocking chair and a cat crouches on the nearby windowsill. This serves to make this more of a retreat to relaxation for the subject. The color of the sewing fabric is reinforced by the blue of her apron—the only bright spots in the composition.

Hermitage Garden, Maison Rouge. 1877, The Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art, Las Vegas. This painting by Pissarro defies classification; it can be either a landscape or a genre painting. Here we find two figures, a woman crouched over her sewing while sitting on a blue bench, and a child playing some feet away with a doll bed and a doll. Our gaze is first drawn to the woman as the white of her clothing contrasts greatly with the dark colors around her. The child is less distinct. This is a “stitching” painting that is easily overlooked.

Girl Sewing. In this painting by Pissarro stripes abound, in both the dress worn by the model and the table covering behind. Light falls on the stitcher’s face and likewise illuminates her hands. We know by the pose that she is sewing.

F. Paul Cézanne

Usually classified as a Post-Impressionist, Cezanne was born of Italian parentage in the south of France. He is probably best known for his landscapes, although he painted every type of genre. Here are two paintings by this artist which depict women stitching.

Madame Cézanne Sewing. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm. Mme Cezanne sits right in the middle of this painting and she herself forms the traditional pyramid form so desirable. She is dressed in bright blue and is seated in a dark red chair. The background includes a green door and lighter green wallpaper. Light floods her hands and to a lesser degree her face. Attention is given to the act of sewing, although the fabric being sewn blends right into her gown. But the line of her nose points directly at the sewing and so it becomes the important part of the painting.

⁴⁶ McQuillan, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

Overture to Tannhäuser. 1868-69, The Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. For the most part this is a very somber painting. Two women are pictured; one plays the piano and the other listens while she sews. The colors are shades of brown and black, but the setting is quite busy with a striped carpet, broadly figured wallpaper, and a flowered chair in the right foreground. The pianist is dressed in white, the one bright spot in the painting, and this white is repeated by the white of the embroidery.

G. Paul Gauguin

Paul Gauguin was another of the Post Impressionist painters who is primarily known for his adventures in the south Pacific. He produced a vast body of painting depicting Tahitian women; sadly none of them is shown sewing. Perhaps this is a comment on their culture. It is believed that until the arrival of the Europeans they mostly wore very little clothing because of their salubrious climate.

Portrait of Mette Gauguin. 1878, E. G. Bürhle Collection, Zurich. Mme Gauguin sits in the classic pose of the stitcher with her head tilted toward her embroidery. The colors of this painting are somber although brightened by a red-green-cream-blue-grey striped panel behind the model. A sewing basket, thread, and scissors sit on the table, which is covered with a heavy looking brocade cloth. One's eyes are drawn to the profile of Mme Gauguin, which in turn directs our attention to the sewing in her hands. The other noticeable aspect is a white cloth—part of the garment Mme is sewing, perhaps.

Study of a Nude: Suzanne Sewing. 1880, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. The model sits in profile with a warm light falling across all of her nude body. However most of her face is in shadow so her identity is unclear. She is seated on white (fur?), and a striped woven wall hanging hangs behind her. The wall hanging is composed of large stripes of white and the flesh tones of the model's body thus emphasizing the model and the robe on which she sits. Her hand holding the needle is raised in the act of stitching; she does not appear to be holding the sewing for effect. Behind the model hangs a lute, perhaps implying the cultural life of the painter.

H. Gustave Caillebotte

Caillebotte was a wealthy Parisian who until recently has been better known for his patronage of his fellow Impressionists rather than for his own body of work. However he has a wide-ranging oeuvre including landscapes, portraits, still lifes, and “a notable and sometimes idiosyncratic vein of indoor and outdoor domestic genre scenes, and above all, a striking, singularly poetic series of images of urban life.”⁴⁷ Nevertheless he produced at least three paintings that depict women stitching.

⁴⁷ *Caillebotte*. Distel, Ann et al. New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1995, p. 13.

Mlle Boissiere Knitting. 1877, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX. The aging Mlle Boissiere sits hunched over her knitting. She is garbed in black (mourning?) and is pictured in an elegant setting. The desk behind her appears to be that of a well-to-do family. A large plane of a table in a tone of orange consumes the lower one third of the painting; this color is complemented by the blue-green of the wallpaper. The wallpaper itself has large cabbage roses; although they are intended to be red, they seem to echo the color of the table. A yellow sewing box sits on the table; it contains two balls of yarn, the color of which is repeated in the knitting Mlle holds.

Portrait of Mme Martial Caillebotte. 1877, collection particuliere. This is a loving portrait by Caillebotte of his mother who is 58 at the time of the sitting. She is absorbed in her needlework, quietly at repose. Mme Caillebotte is pictured among the trappings of a wealthy woman of the era. She is seated in a red velvet armchair with what appears to be a lacy pillow behind her. Red velvet drapery is apparent at the right. Behind her is another portrait—we can see the lower half, and a heavy candelabra and an elegant clock sit atop the marble fireplace. “This visual opulence is offset by the woman’s austerity, for she is dressed in the mourning gown and bonnet.”⁴⁸

Portrait à la Campagne. 1876, Musée Baron Gerard, Bayeux. This is a portrait, even though none of the subjects fixes us with her gaze. The four women, all relatives of Caillebotte, are absorbed in their embroidery, although in the background the elder Mme Caillebotte is reading. We do not know if she is reading to the whole group or to herself. The scene is one of relaxation in a luxurious setting; these women relax in an obviously well landscaped yard with well-tended flowers in the background. The women are wealthy, yet still industrious; most likely their daily needs are taken care of by servants but these disciplined souls would not allow themselves to be idle. Although two of the women wear mourning garb the riotous red flowers in the background offer a note of hope.

I. Henri Fantin-Latour

Fantin-Latour was a contemporary of the Impressionists and the son of another portraitist. He is better known for his floral still-lives, but has also produced numerous portraits of his family and friends.

The Two Sisters. 1859, St. Louis Art Museum, MO. This double portrait shows the sisters of Fantin-Latour seated quietly in what appears to be an upper middle class interior. One sister Natalie sits at an embroidery frame; this is the sister who would battle depression for her lifetime. The other sister Marie reads. This is a common composition which indicates to the observer that the young women of this household were well educated.

The Two Sisters offers a glimpse into the intimate sheltered world of middle class young women at mid-nineteenth century. The subdued interior is enlivened only by touches of white in the girls’ apparel and by the colorful yarns on the embroidery frame.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁴⁹ Johnston, p. 96.

J. Charles Hawthorne

The Trousseau In this painting of three women the centerpiece is the intended bride. She stands with a resigned expression on her face, though perhaps she is dreaming of her bridegroom. The bride is wearing the “underwear” of the day: a camisole and a full petticoat. Two women appear to be working on her trousseau. Are these perhaps her mother and her aunt or grandmother? The woman at the right sits sewing on something diaphanous; at her elbow sit the accoutrements of sewing complete with the bright spot of the painting—a tomato pincushion. The other woman, to the left of the bride, has her face half hidden in shadow and the expression on her face is prim. Light floods the figure of the bride, as if for once in her life she is the star of the show.

K. Marcus Stone

In Love. 1888, Castle Museum, Nottingham. This painting depicts a courtship theme but is not strictly an Impressionist painting, belonging more to the Romantic style. Nonetheless a young man plays court to a young woman, who studiously ignores him while devoting herself to her embroidery. The suitor assumes almost the identical pose to that of the man in the Eakins painting. The woman is composed and submissive; this was the ideal for a 19th century woman. However, erotic symbols abound in this painting. There is a sculpture of Cupid in the background, and apples—the symbol of Eve—rest on the table. She has already shed her sunhat, suggesting perhaps her availability.

L. Odilon Redon

Mme. Redon Brodant (Réunion des Musees Nationaux, France) Odilon Redon is classified as a symbolist and is best known for fantastic flower arrangements and still lifes. This is a pastel portrait of his wife, simply done with no background at all. Were it not for the title of the artwork we might not know for sure that this painting depicts a stitcher, although Mme Redon holds her hand in the characteristic poise, and her head is bowed in the typical stance. However we do not see any needle or the product of her work.

Mme Arthur Fontaine (Marie Escudier). 1901, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. This portrait by Redon is notable for the brilliant yellow of the subject’s gown, which is also reflected in the motifs she is embroidering. Mme Fontaine is elegantly gowned with much wide lace at her collar and her sleeves. Her dark hair is a counterpoint to the bright yellow. In the background we see some flowers for which Redon is so famous.

Chapter 5

The Embroiderer as Depicted by American Impressionists

Impressionism made its way to this side of the Atlantic a few years after it took hold and became an identifiable artistic movement in France. Controversy raged in America also, and there was much debate over whether the American artists should actually be considered Impressionists, as the American eye was as yet unschooled in its style. However, in retrospect we place the American painters with the Impressionists because of

...several factors—including the rendering of bright outdoor light and color, the optical breakdown of detail, the concern for contemporary life, and the cultivation of a direct and spontaneous approach to subjects—that could occur separately or in combination.⁵⁰

In 1897 ten American artists seceded from the Society of American Artists and formed a group loosely affiliated which agreed to exhibit together. Some of these painters had studied together; indeed some had studied with the recognized Impressionists in Europe. But they lived in various locations along the East Coast, painted in different styles, and practiced a variety of life styles. Counted in their number are: Childe Hassam, J. Alden Weir, John Twachtman, Robert Reid, Willard Metcalf, Frank W. Benson, Edmund Tarbell, Thomas Dewing, Joseph R. De Camp, and Edward Simmons. William Merritt Chase was asked to join later on.⁵¹

A. Childe Hassam

Childe Hassam is acknowledged today as the leading exponent of Impressionism in America. As the painter who most persistently and effectively applied the principles of French Impressionism to the American setting, he was considered even by his contemporaries to be America's most important representative of that style.⁵²

Ten Pound Island. 1896, David Warner Foundation, Tuscaloosa, AL. This painting depicts two women seated on a shady porch. The light effect is dappled; small shadows flicker everywhere. The women sit in reed rocking chairs; one holds a book in her hand but she gazes at her companion. The other woman is intent on her embroidery; its color reflects the garments of the two women. In the near background is lush foliage and beyond that is a lake with a small island on which sits a yellow house. We can see the opposite shore in the far background. The yellow of the house is repeated in the book held by one woman. Two additional rockers are empty, awaiting the husbands perhaps?

⁵⁰ *Impressionism in America*. Hiesinger, Ulrich W. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1991, p. 11.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵² *Childe Hassam. American Impressionist*. Hiesinger, Ulrich W. Munich: Prestal-Verlag, 1994, p. 9.

The Terre Cuite Tea Set. 1910, Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga, TN. This widely reproduced beautiful painting by Hassam depicts a woman in white dress and dark blue hat. She is seated on a bench in a garden and the touches of orange flowers offer a good complement to her blue hat and scarf. Tea has been laid on the table; however she chooses to ignore it while she continues to work on her sewing. At first glance one might think that the subject is merely holding a napkin preparatory to placing it on her lap. However, if you observe closely you will see that she wears a thimble on the appropriate finger.



Hassam, Childe (1859-1935) French Tea Garden (also known as The Terre Cuite Tea Set), oil on canvas 1910, 35 x 40-1/4 in. Hunter Museum of American Art, Chattanooga Tennessee, Gift of the Benwood Foundation.

Maude Sewing. 1883, St. Louis Art Museum, MO. This painting pictures Hassam's wife Maude presumably ill for she is in bed. Her embroidery lies on her lap, but unlike most "stitching" pictures she neither holds it up in a good position to work on it, nor does she look at it. And contrary to most Impressionist paintings, which exhibit intense pure color, all is pale in this painting. The bedding is a light value of beige; the scarf around Maude's neck reiterates this color. Her gown is pale, and so is her complexion. Only the paneling in the upper right is a more intense value of brown. Maude herself has a resigned look on her face.

B. Frank Benson

The Open Window. 1917, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Many "stitching pictures" include a window, perhaps to offer the artist an opportunity to experiment with light and the figure contrasting with it, or perhaps so the stitcher could see to embroider while sitting for the painting. This painting by Benson shows the wide space of a room, with a figure seated nearly in the center of the painting. Other pieces of furniture are placed about the room and light floods in through two open windows. The stitcher holds what appears to be crocheting; she wears a beautifully hued jacket, which draws the viewer's eye to her.

The Sunny Window. 1919, private collection. A young woman sits in front of a substantial window through which streams brilliant light. The tones of the painting are mostly a greyed out yellow; both the walls and the woman's dress are this hue. In the classic embroiderer's pose we see her profile with head bent to the task and hands raised to hold the work. Very little in this painting distracts the viewer from the subject.

C. Joseph De Camp

The Seamstress. 1916, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. This is another of the “window” paintings, which were popular with the American Impressionists. Here the stitcher is framed by a window, which reveals a cityscape beyond. Sheer curtains form a symmetrical backdrop for her, and her clothing seems to echo the sheerness of the curtains. The implements of her trade are arrayed on the table. Once more her profile reveals the classic needlewoman pose; we are drawn to her hand because of the contrast of her hair color with the remainder of the painting.

D. Willard Metcalf

Summer at Waterford. 1917-1918, Berry Hill Galleries. This is a rich painting which reveals portraits of two people, a woman embroidering by the light of open French doors, and a child, probably her daughter, if we can go by the hair color. The child is cutting paper. Beyond the French doors we have a view of a lake and the greenery surrounding it. The pair is seated on a sofa, which is bedecked with patterned pillows in a red-orange tone; these colors are reflected in the woman’s dress. This is a consummate Impressionist genre painting.

Goose Girl. 1884, private collection. This earlier painting by Metcalf was probably during his sojourn in France, as it “shows the impact of the French tradition of painting day-to-day rural life outdoors.”⁵³

This painting depicts the French countryside with two children tending geese. In the distance—in the sunshine—we see a house and a barn. Both girls wear white caps (a style in Brittany in past years) which reflect the color of the retreating geese. The older girl must be the diligent sort for she does three tasks simultaneously: she tends the geese, she baby-sits, and she works at her knitting.

E. J. Alden Weir

Summer (originally “Friends”). 1898, private collection. A young woman sits on the ground, peacefully embroidering while her faithful dog is curled up beside her. She leans against some rocks and green foliage is behind her. A spindly tree makes a strong vertical to her left. She is rather elegantly dressed for such outdoor activity. Light emphasizes her straw hat and the embroidery she holds in her hand. There is strong emphasis on the brush stroking, especially the sitter’s gown, and, of course, the dog.

⁵³ *Monet’s Giverny* (engagement calendar). New York: Abbeville Publishing Group, 1997.

F. Edmund Tarbell

Mother and Mary. 1922, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. This painting emphasizes wide space and perspective. A great expanse of floor with brilliant reflections leads the eye to the two figures seated at the far end of the room. Tarbell has portrayed his sister sitting at a desk between two windows. She is turned toward their mother who is sewing at the very edge of the painting. Because most of the colors are subdued one is immediately drawn to the light on the younger woman's face and dress (a pale tint of pink) and the pink of the fabric on which Mrs. Tarbell sews. This pink is reiterated faintly by the pink of the flowers on the table to the left.

G. William Merritt Chase

William Merritt Chase is better known as a landscape painter. He particularly concentrated on New York—both Manhattan and Brooklyn.

For the Little One. 1895, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. This painting portrays Chas's wife seated on a settee near a sunny window. Light streams through the leaded glass panes and the whole room appears to be bathed in sun. Mrs. Chase wears a gown of white and the garment on which she sews is also white. We may gather by the title that this is a baby garment. In the background Chase has also included portions of other paintings by him; perhaps this is a corner of his studio and his wife has dropped by to sew and keep him company while he paints.

H. Theodore Robinson

La Vachère. C. 1888, Smithsonian American Art Museum. This is a quiet peaceful study of a woodland scene with a cowherd (la vachère) in the foreground; she is accompanied by a tranquil cow that stands at her back. Sunlight filters through the foliage and shines on her neck and arms; she is turned away from the sun so she can better see the embroidery on which she diligently works. Robinson spent time in Giverny and his painting technique in this work reflects this.

I. Edward E. Simmons

Le Printemps. 1883, private collection. In this quiet nature painting, Simmons depicts a young country maid strolling through a green field amid glorious trees in full bloom of spring. The flowers on the trees are a pale pink, which contrast greatly with the green of the grass. In the far background one can spy the sea and some boats. The subject is dressed as a peasant; the sun shines on her white cap. A close inspection reveals that she knits as she walks in the field.

Other American Artists Not Members of "The Ten"

A. Gari Melchers

Young Woman Sewing. 1919, Belmont, The Gari Melchers Estate and Gallery, May Washington collection, Fredericksburg, VA. This is a consummate Impressionist painting which depicts a woman tranquilly sewing at a window. Melchers has included a landscape outside the window, and a small still life on the sewing table. The seamstress sits in a rocking chair and is framed by sheer curtains, the color of which is reiterated in her gown, which appears to be a grey blue. Attention is drawn to the bowl of flowers on the table; the flowers are the one bright spark in the painting.



Gari Melchers. *Penelope*, 1910. Corcoran Gallery of Art. Washington, DC.

Penelope. 1910, Corcoran Gallery, Washington DC. This painting by Gari Melchers is a busy painting whose subject matter somewhat reflects that of Vermeer. The main subject of the painting sits to the rear of a room, and sunlight floods in from the window at the left. She is busy at her needlework, which is stretched on a frame—this is no simple mending task. Her maid faces her and appears to hold more needlework in her hands. Other items are depicted: a chair in the foreground, a table with a lamp, a fireplace with things displayed upon it, a vase of flowers next to the window. The back wall is papered in a somewhat intense yellow festooned with cabbage roses and ribbons and an equestrian portrait hangs over the subject. The title of the painting (“*Penelope*”) probably refers to the classical tale of Odysseus. Odysseus’s wife Penelope waited for him for 10 years, all the time avoiding remarriage by stitching on a tapestry by daylight, and picking it out at night.

B. Frederick Carl Frieseke

Torn Lingerie. 1915, St. Louis Art Museum. This painting was prize winner at the Art Institute of Chicago's 1920 show, and Frieseke was accorded many other honors for his artistic achievements at this time, including the prestigious Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor. This honor is not commonly bestowed on an American.

Torn Lingerie depicts Frieseke's wife Sarah (Sadie) busily mending her petticoat while actually wearing it—something most women can relate to. She inexplicably wears ballerina shoes; is she just posing as one? The vanity to her left is draped in lace and littered with feminine toilette items: brushes, combs, mirror, cosmetics, and flowers. The pink of her petticoats is reflected in the elaborate chair on which she sits, and in the flowers on the table. This is a most feminine of paintings.



Frederick Frieseke. Torn Lingerie, 1915, oil on canvas, 51.25 x 51.75 cm. St. Louis Art Museum (310:1916).

On the Balcony. 1912-1915, Akron Art Museum, OH. Here Frieseke paints one of his favorite themes: a woman very composed and relaxed working in a luxurious interior. His subject, once again his wife, sits in a rattan chair working on a large white garment. At her elbow is a sewing basket. We can see an attractive wrought iron railing outside the window. Mrs. Frieseke wears a black and white striped dress which enhances her dark hair. The mood is sunny and relaxed.

C. Francis Davis Millet

The Window Seat. 1883, Manoogian Collection, Detroit, MI. This lovely painting is by an American artist painting in England and reputedly depicts Millet's wife.

“The figure in *The Window Seat*, a handsome young woman dressed in a muslin dress and fichu of the early nineteenth century, sits off-center in the composition, her eyes intent on her fancywork.”⁵⁴

Next to the woman is a sewing bag and some scissors. On the table nearby a small still life itself, is a vase of dried flowers and some books. The sheer curtains repeat the white of Mrs. Millet's fichu. The woman appears to be crocheting.

⁵⁴ *American Paintings from the Manoogian Collection*. Smyth, Frances P., Ed. Washington, DC: The National Gallery of Art, 1990, p. 53.

D. Daniel Garber

Mending. Manoogian collection. A woman is seated in a wicker chair, most likely on a porch as we see the railing in the background. She is hunched over her work, which rests on her lap. On the floor in front of her is a small basket; probably this is her sewing basket. She is plainly and comfortably dressed, almost as if this is a more modern woman.

E. Lilla Cabot Perry

Ms. Perry is noted as the foremost American woman painter of her time, if we count Mary Cassatt as French (she spent her entire professional career there). Perry is noted for her portraits, most often of women, although she also experimented with landscapes.

Child Sewing at a Window. Private collection. A young girl sits in front of a window, crochet hook in hand. She wears a light colored dress, which may be striped; it also features a wide lace collar. The focus of the painting is on the handwork as it is red and everything else is very subdued. Sunlight floods the girl's collar and lap.

F. Ellen Day Hale

June. c. 1892, National Museum of Women in the Arts. This Impressionist painting depicts a young woman wearing a blue and white checked dress. She sits in a straight-backed chair and works at her sewing. Her hands and head are in the characteristic needlewoman pose, and we are sure she is sewing by the thimble she wears. Light filters in from a window at her right. It highlights her blond hair, her shoulder, the upper buttons of her bodice, and her hands, thus drawing attention to the sewing she holds.

G. Frank Desch

The Blue Negligee. Other information not available. A young woman sits in front of a window. We view her in profile. Most outstanding in the painting is her lovely graceful neck, which is enhanced by a ruffled white lace collar. Was the nape of the neck perhaps an erotic part of the body at this time? She wears a bright blue dress and sits in a light brown rocking chair; these two colors together are complements. A bag hangs off the back of the chair and a vase of flowers is on the shelf next to the window. Our attention is drawn to the needlework because light falls upon it, and its color (white) is repeated in the lace trim of the dress, and the white of the vase.

H. Marguerite Stuber Pearson

Sewing by the Fireplace. Christie's Images, NY, no date. In this painting the stitcher sits in front of a fireplace. The room is precisely detailed; we see a small table with a copper pitcher holding branches of small blooms. Candlesticks adorn the mantel, as does a small figurine. There is a floral painting over the fireplace and sconces on either side. A bed warming pan is propped next to the hearth. Most striking is the young woman's red full dress and once again, her beautiful graceful neck, which is bathed in light from an unknown source.

I. John Sharman

At the End of the Porch. C. 1918, Indianapolis Museum of Art, IN. This beautiful painting of radiant light depicts a stitcher at the end of a porch. A trellis gives the appearance of a window; we also see shades and white walls. The furniture is rattan; the model's chair is draped with a coral color sweater. This color is repeated in the hollyhocks beyond the porch. Her dress is blue. Light absolutely floods this painting, yet we are drawn to the solitary figure engrossed in her needlework.



John Sharman, American. *At the End of the Porch*, ca 1918, oil on canvas, 26-1/4 x 40-1/4. IMA 81.6 Indianapolis Museum of Art, James E. Roberts Fund.

J. Susan Macdowell Eakins

Susan Eakins was the wife of the more famous Thomas Eakins and her painting career lasted longer than his did, but she never received recognition during her lifetime. Nevertheless her style resembles her husbands with its sense of quiet, the same rich dark backgrounds, the some eloquent but never fussy details and the same interest in individual personalities.⁵⁵

Two Sisters. 1897, private collection of Peggy MacDowell. In this painting Susan Eakins pictures her two sisters Dolly and Elizabeth. Both sisters are garbed in sober tones although their dresses are decorated with buttons and lace. Dolly has put down her book while Elizabeth continues with her sewing. Light is reflected on the sisters' faces, on the book, and on the piece of fabric on Elizabeth's lap. Both sisters' hands are given an important place in this painting; both are highlighted and both sisters' gazes are directed at the handwork.

⁵⁵ *Women Artists, an illustrated history.* Heller, Nancy G. New York: Abbeville Press, 1997, p. 102.

K. Thomas Eakins

The Courtship. 1878, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. This painting depicts a young couple during the development phase of their relationship. He gazes intently at the young woman, but she is absorbed in her work—which is spinning. Is she perhaps playing hard to get? Or is this still another example where a woman concentrated on her needlework to demonstrate how capable she is and what a good wife she would make? Some interpret her composure and lack of interaction with the suitor as a sexual come-on. The young man slouches resignedly in his chair, his head supported on his hand.

Eakins's brush stroking is evident, and light bathes the couple, although not their faces.

L James McNeill Whistler

Tatting. c. 1890, James McNeill Whistler, The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, NY. This is a black and white painting on board, very loosely brushstroked and probably unfinished. The sitter appears to hold on her lap a large garment or blanket on which she is working. The ball of yarn has rolled to the ground. In spite of the title it is my feeling that this woman is probably crocheting rather than tatting. This is based on the fact that the product is rather large to have been tatted, and there does not appear to be a shuttle anywhere in the painting.

M. Catherine Wiley

Willow Pond. 1914, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. This lovely Impressionist painting depicts two young women sitting alongside a sunlit pond. Both girls are clad in white or pastels. As is a typical theme, one girl reads while the other works on her embroidery. This indicates that these are both accomplished in the womanly arts held desirable at the time.

N. Elizabeth Nourse

Happy Days. 1905, Detroit Institute of Art. In this painting we see a woman holding on her lap a cheeky toddler while at the same time she works on her sewing—a good example of multi-tasking. An older child looks on intently, no doubt getting a lesson from her mother. In the background we see a cabinet on which is placed a mirror and some other objects, one of which is a bridal couple. Light falls on the children's faces, particularly that of the older daughter; one might not notice that the other is sewing except for the tilt of her head.

O. William McGregor Paxton

Woman Sewing. Detroit Institute of Art. In a painting somewhat reminiscent of Vermeer's style a woman sits sewing near a window. Light streams through the window, illuminating her cheek and the handwork, and the sewing basket just inside the window. Other tones of the picture are subdued: her dressing gown is patterned but in drab tones; likewise the small chair against the rear wall is patterned but not bright. On the chair rests her black bonnet. Above this is a portion of another painting, and we can spy the fragment of a Chinese vase.

P. Jennie Augusta Brownscombe

"Jennie Brownscombe's work was immensely popular in the United States, and her sentimental scenes of idyllic rural life and formal depictions of historical events were often engraved and reproduced."⁵⁶

Love's Young Dream. 1887, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC. This painting is very much a landscape as well as a genre painting. Most prominent in the picture is a young woman dressed in sober colors. She stands in front of a fence; her head is averted; she holds a bunch of summer flowers in her hand. Her parents sit on the porch behind her, the father intent on his reading, and the mother on her knitting. However the mother's face is tilted toward her daughter and light falls upon her. In the distance on the road is the faint figure of a horseman who is riding rapidly along the row of autumn trees. The flowers in the young woman's hand are daisies: does he love her? Or love her not?

Q. Edward Hopper

East Side Interior. 1922, De Young Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. In this etching we see a typical Edward Hopper composition expressing loneliness. A woman sits alongside a window, looking out at the world outside. We can see the column of the porch and a railing of the steps. She is working at a sewing machine (this is one of only a few artworks I have identified which show someone using a sewing machine). Hopper has also included interior furnishings: two chairs and a bureau, a painting, and a hanging plant.

R. Mary Fairchild MacMonnies

In the Nursery. 1897-98, Giverny Studio, Daniel J. Terra Collection, Chicago. Mary MacMonnies, who was the wife of renowned sculptor Frederick MacMonnies, spent several summers at Giverny and adopted the Impressionist style. She often painted the interior of her

⁵⁶ Barlow, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

own studio, as in this painting. We see two women and a child in a high chair. The woman in the foreground works at the window, with her sewing basket next to her. The other woman, who is probably a servant because of her cap, also appears to be sewing, although it is hard to be sure. To the right we see the artist's easel and a painting in progress, and on the rear wall we see other paintings and copies made by Mary herself.

S. Frederick Arthur Bridgman

Moorish Interior. c. 1875-79, Detroit Institute of Art. This is a scene of our image of a "harem", complete with fabulous Islamic architecture, carpets, a fountain, cushions, jars, and slaves. In one corner a woman, much apart from the primary focus, sits quietly sewing.

T. Eanger Irving Couse

Eanger Couse is well known in western US art circles as a painter of Native Americans engaged in their daily tasks. Most of his paintings depict men, usually with the stereotypical long braids and leather leggings we identify with the Native Americans. One charming aspect is his addition of Indian pottery; it often signals the pueblo to which the Native American belongs.

The War Bonnet. 1910, New Mexico Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe. In this painting an Indian brave hunkers down while working on his war bonnet. The headdress is rich with feathers and beading; he appears to be embellishing the beaded sections. At his side is a large olla (water jar); its design suggests he belongs to Acoma pueblo.

U. Eastman Johnson

The Brown Family. 1869, The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. A couple and a small child are pictured in the rich setting of a prosperous American family. Johnson has depicted the interior with great detail. In one corner sits the woman garbed in black and attentive to her knitting. The gentleman turns his attention from his newspaper to the little girl in her green velvet coat and hat, a half smile crossing his face. This is most likely a grandchild and Mr. Brown does not seem distressed by the interruption.

V. Emily Carr

Emily Carr, one of Canada's best-known painters, was born in Victoria, BC, in 1871. She studied and lived in California, England, and France, where she absorbed the lessons of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, and Fauvism.

Preferring rural life to city life she returned to western Canada, journeying into remote areas to preserve images of historic totem poles being lost to decay.⁵⁷

Women of Brittany (French Lace Makers). 1911, Vancouver Art Gallery, BC. This painting is worked in a Post-Impressionistic manner. Two women are busy at their lace work. One is perched on a windowsill; we can see the building across the street over her left shoulder. Her feet are on the seat of a nearby chair. The other woman sits in a more conventional fashion and works intently on her lace. Both women bow their heads to the task and seem not to be in conversation. Carr uses a very loose technique and her colors are fairly pure.

Salish Woman Weaving. No date, Provincial Archives, British Columbia. In this simple painting a First Nation Canadian woman sits on a low stool. She is working on her weaving (although it appears to be a beaded headband). She wears a black dress with an orange apron. A window is shown over her shoulder; otherwise the background is indeterminate. On the floor beside her sit her sewing supplies. This is one of Carr's early genre paintings.



Emily Carr. Salish Woman Weaving, British Columbia Archives, Victoria BC.

⁵⁷ Barlow, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

Chapter 6

The Embroiderer as Depicted by the Artists of Skagen

Skagen (pronounced skane) is a small city on the very northernmost tip of the Jutland peninsula of Denmark. A land of beautiful sunny summers, it has been an art colony since the early 1800's and attracted many visitors to its wonderful beaches. By the 1880's a number of artists migrated there with their families and painted together, concentrating to a great degree on portraits and genre paintings. Their style was very like that of the French Impressionists and was probably influenced by them. Much of the artwork of Skagen concentrated on their fellow citizens involved in their daily activities and many of these activities involved stitching. One book, *The Painters of Skagen* by Knud Voss (Voss, Knud Skagensmalerne, Stok-Art APS, 1990) recounts the Skagen experience and displays numerous paintings by the artists. There is now a museum in Skagen in which hangs much of the artwork produced by these artists.

A. Michael Ancher

Young Woman Crocheting: Tine. 1880, Ordrupgaard Collection, near Copenhagen. In this Impressionist style painting we see a young girl working on her crocheting (if we are to believe the title of the painting). She sits among the furnishings of a home; a chest of drawers is partially visible over her left shoulder and we also see a small table and perhaps the back of a chair. Light falls on her lovely blond hair, and her pink blouse. Her head is bent to her needlework, which becomes the focal point because of its brilliant whiteness—the only white in the painting.

B. Anna Ancher

Two Little Girls Being Taught to Sew. 1910, Skagen Museum. In this painting we see a woman accompanied by two young girls. The woman holds some needlework in her hands; we can only see the backs of the children's heads. A spindly tree is on the right edge of the painting and the shadows of its leaves are cast behind the woman. Emphasis is on the face of the woman; her gaze is focused on the needlework. Especially notable is the hairstyle of one child: her blond braids suggest the notion of the handwork they are studying.

A Blue Dress Being Sewn for a Fancy-Dress Party. 1920, Skagen Museum. The immense blue yardage dominates this painting; it contrasts greatly with the large field of yellow which comprises the walls of the room. Three older women are working industriously on the blue dress; a sewing machine sits on the table, but all are engaged in hand stitching. One woman wears a dress of yellow, another a dark red, and the third is clad in mourning garb. This red/yellow/blue serve to effect a primary color scheme. A lacy valance flutters in the breeze, and a flowering potted plant brightens and softens the scene. In spite of the mourning gown this is a bright and cheerful painting.

A Sewing Class in Skagen. 1910, New Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. This painting is Post-Impressionistic in style, almost hinging on the abstract. The brushstrokes are very broad, and only suggestions of the figures are in the background. Much of this painting is in tones of yellow, including the chairs, the tables, and the hair of the numerous girls. Although we know their pinafores are white they are suffused with yellow tones. Only the teacher, who reads from a book, is garbed in red. The same tree as in “Two little Girls Being Taught How to Sew” sits in the background, and the window treatment is the same as in the Blue Dress painting noted above.

Sunlight in the Blue Room; Helga Ancher Crocheting in her Grandmother’s Room. 1891, Skagen. Vivid contrast of blue and yellow make this the most agreeable of paintings by Anna Ancher. Her daughter sits perches on the edge of a hard chair near a window, busily occupied with her crochet. The great expanse of wall that comprises the upper one-quarter of the painting is broken by a portrait of what appears to be the Virgin Mary in her prototypical blue. We also see the sunlight falling through a nearby window; the shadows of the plants on the windowsill add a note of interest. The floor is blue and dull yellow striped; there are several chairs with blue seats, and Helga herself wears a blue pinafore. We are drawn to the child’s head because of her bright yellow hair; its color is reiterated throughout the painting.



Anna Ancher. Solskin i den blå stue (Sunlight in the Blue Room), 1891; Olie på lærred. 65.2 x 58.8 cm Skagens Museum Denmark # 222.

Interior with Woman Sewing. 1910, Skagen Museum. This is a very loosely constructed painting, which shows a woman in profile bent over her handwork. Her dress is very drab although there are splotches of orange here and there. The wall is the same blue to which we have become accustomed in these paintings by Ms. Ancher; here there are yellow patterns on them from the window at the upper right. The features of the woman are indeterminate, but we know she is sewing by the attitude of her head and hands (and by the title of the painting).

Kræn Wollensen Mending Nets. 1886, Skagen Museum. This painting depicts a gentleman working at the fishing nets. Although we see him from the rear and can barely make out his hands we know that he is engaging in an activity related to stitching. The nets are draped from the window handle across a small sofa. Light comes through the window and casts its pattern on the floor to the right of the stitcher; we see the shadow of the plants on the sill. Light also falls on the nets and on the hat and pipe of the man. A small blue cloud arises from his pipe. Exquisite attention to detail is paid in the rendering of the nets; we clearly see its patterns.

Keeping Grandma Amused. 1912, Ribe Art Museum, DK. This is a painting of two figures, a young child clothed in a red dress with a red bow in her blond hair, and the aging grandmother garbed in black with a white bonnet. The grandmother holds the sewing; the child peers on intently while leaning on a round table which holds the scissors and thread. The background is the characteristic blue with a portion of a painting shown above the grandmother's head. We may assume from the title that it is the child (or perhaps the mother, Anna who instigated this lesson). It is a beautiful representation of the stages of life of a woman.

C. P. S. Krøyer

Old Lene by her Spinning Wheel. 1887, Skagen Museum. This painting depicts an elderly woman at her spinning wheel. The artist has employed a palette of dark and drab colors—much of this painting is effected in blacks and dark browns. The exception is the face and hands of the woman, and the curtained window through which a small amount of light shines. The light falls on the woman's face, which is intent on her task.

A French Fisherman Mending Nets. 1886, Skagen Museum. This painting also is effected in drab tones with only the light from the window offering some relief. A man smoking a pipe sits intent on his task of mending; a large needle is obvious in his right hand, on which some light falls. Only his jaunty red scarf deviates from the somber palette and offers some brightness to the setting.

The Artist's Wife. 1897, Skagen Museum. This charcoal sketch shows Mrs. Krøyer in a relaxed pose, intent on her sewing. Her head and hands are in the characteristic stitcher's attitude; we see her in profile.

D. Laurits Tuxen

The Artist's Mother Bertha Tuxen with her Grandchild Nina. 1902, private collection. This is a very detailed painting of a charming domestic scene in which an older woman sits with her young granddaughter in a lovely corner window setting. The two sit on a richly patterned corner settee. Two windows are behind them with several pink-flowered plants on the sill. A sewing table sits to one side and another table with an elaborate drape peeks out from the other edge of the painting. The woman wears black, including a hat and a light pink shawl. The child is clad in white with pink bows in her blond hair. The mood is peaceful and intimate.

The Artist's Second Wife with his Daughters Nina and Yvonne in the Garden in Skagen. 1922. This serene painting shows three women outside in a garden. They are seated on a white bench with red cushions. All three women wear hats to protect them from the sun, and all three are busily engaged in their needlework; their heads are tilted down and their hands are all raised slightly above their laps. The background, as befits an outdoor setting, is mostly green; however bright touches of red, yellow, and blue add a primary color triad to the composition. The features of the women are practically indistinguishable, but we know the center figure is the older woman.

E. Helga Ancher

Helga Ancher was the daughter of Michael and Anna. "She was the last of the artists of Skagen who followed the tradition from the great days of the 1880's onward."⁵⁸

Mrs. Brøndum at her Sewing. 1910, Skagen Museum. This is a pencil sketch of one of the residents of Skagen. The old woman is shown with her head bent over her sewing, her hands holding the needle and fabric closely together.

⁵⁸ *The Painters of Skagen.* Voss, Knud. Scandinavia: Stok-Art, 1990, p. 239.

Chapter 7

Post-Impressionists

A. Joseph Raphael

Child Sewing. 1916, De Young Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. In this Post-Impressionist very loosely brushstroked painting we see a child slouched in a straight-backed chair sewing intently. Her long thin legs are askew, her straw hat is pulled down over her face, and her doll lies in a heap on the floor beside her. She sits beside a table with a large book and some sewing implements. Colorful flowers abound all about her. Much of this painting is flooded with a bright blue, and very obvious paint strokes. Is this painting trying to signify the journey from childhood (the doll) to young womanhood with its learning (the book) and its obligations (the sewing)? Certainly the brilliant flowers make it seem a happy transition.



Joseph Raphael. Child Sewing. oil on canvas, 1916. 24-3/4 in x 29-7/8 in. Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, Gift of Albert M. Bender, 1926.2.

B. Raoul Dufy

The Veranda at Villerville. c. 1930, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Le Havre, France. This is a Post-Impressionist painting in the Fauve style with brilliant use of color. Blue light pervades the scene—a veranda complete with classical column and wonderful windows affording a view of the sea. Three women sit engaged in their handwork; they sit around a table draped with a brilliantly striped cloth.

“...For Dufy was attracted by the leisure life and his subjects were frequently casinos, race courses, and fashionable resort promenades, which he depicted with bold splashes of color. In this painting he expresses the light, airy veranda in a charming domestic scene.”⁵⁹

C. Edouard Vuillard

Vuillard was a member of the Nabis, a diverse group of artists who joined together in 1888, imbued with a common desire to transcend Impressionism with its emphasis on recording pure visual sensations. ...They produced an art of great excitement and beauty and laid the foundations for Fauvism.⁶⁰

Embroidering by the Window. 1895-96, The Museum of Modern Art, NY. In this painting a woman wears a voluminous black skirt and wide-sleeved white blouse. She sits by a sunny window busy at her needlework. This is no simple mending; she is producing a piece of art for the walls of her home. Red yarn dangles from her left hand, brightening the picture immensely; it repeats the reddish color of her hair.

Dressmaking. 1892-95, De Young Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. This is a very loosely worked painting depicting a woman quite heavily leaning on a table. She seems to be working on sewing, if we can believe the title, but no needle is apparent, although her hands seem to be in the appropriate position. We see only the top of her head; no facial features appear at all.

La Ravaudeuse. No date, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, France. This is perhaps the same model wearing the same dress as “Dressmaking” above. This time we see her whole body as she sits on an unseen chair (it’s presumably hidden by her dress). She is tightly hunched over her sewing, which is a white fabric held in her hand. The wallpaper behind her is dark red and heavily but indistinctly figured with large dabs of color.

Deux Femmes Brodant Sous Une Veranda. No date, Musée d’Orsay, Paris. An overall impression of the color yellow pervades this genre painting by Vuillard. One woman wears a toned down yellow dress; the same color is repeated in the side of the chair on which the other woman sits. We also see large yellow panes on around the windows at the far end of the veranda. The landscape outside, which is rendered in the most grey of greens, is echoed by an

⁵⁹ *The Art of the Post-Impressionists*. Swinglehurst, Edmund. New York: Shooting Star Press, 1995, p. 62-63.

⁶⁰ *Vuillard*. Preston, Stuart. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985, front jacket flap.

indoor plant. Great attention is given to the tiles of the floor. We see neither woman's face as they are bent to their embroidery.

Mme A. Binard. No date, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, France. This painting is much more of a portrait. Mme Binard is portrayed in an elaborate interior. She wears an elegant black gown and her feet rest on a richly woven large pillow. The table at her side is draped in lace; an elaborately carved etagère is in the background. Above her head is a large portrait of a man—her husband or father, no doubt. Other smaller portraits are below it. She holds in her lap her crocheting and the white yarn is continued over to the table where the skein of yarn lies. Next to it is the very latest in French telephones. Mme Binard meets our gaze with an unaffected look. She is elegant, but time has taken its toll.

D. Lucie Cousturier

Femme Faisant du Crochet. 1908, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, France. This painting is quite pointillist in technique, perhaps somewhat between Cezanne, Seurat, and Van Gogh. It is worked in daubs of yellow, blue, and blue-green with small accents of orange. This woman sits up straight with the sun on her face and holds a crochet hook for all to see. Above her head we can see portions of two paintings on the wall.

E. Lady Laura T. Alma-Tadema

Sweet Industry. 1904, Manchester City Art Gallery, England. This is a “sweet” picture of a lovely young woman contemplating her needlework in the privacy of her own room. Her hand is raised preparatory to taking the next stitch. We see the corner of a massive bed and perhaps a desk behind her. Light streams from the window to highlight her lovely face and the beautiful gown she wears.

F. Diego Rivera

Diego Rivera was a Mexican artist, and married to the famous woman artist Frida Kahlo. He is better known as a muralist and indeed his monumental murals adorn the exterior walls of the main government buildings in Mexico City. He is also famous because of the giant industry murals in a courtyard in the Detroit Institute of Art.

“Following the 1910 revolution in Mexico art became the main cultural manifestation of the political ideologies of the nation. Rivera, one of three renowned muralists was the most revered, imitated, or reacted against by all his contemporaries.”⁶¹

The Weaver. Art Institute of Chicago. This is a classic painting of a native woman weaving on a back strap loom. We see her in profile, seated on her knees on the floor, her long braid hanging down her back. The loom is attached to the wall and the woman bends her head to the work. A swift containing yarn sits before her; the only other element of the painting is a blue chest of drawers. Rivera has given dignity to the humble task of a humble citizen of his country.



Diego Rivera,. The Weaver, 1936. Tempera and oil on canvas, 66 x 106.7 cm. Gift of Josephine Wallace KixMiller in memory of her mother, Julie F. Miller who purchased the painting from the artist at his studio in Mexico in 1936. 1998.52

⁶¹ Beckett, p. 370.

G. Vincent Van Gogh

Early in his career Van Gogh lived in Nuen among the peasant folk. This is a northern city, a working class town, and Van Gogh chose his palette to reflect the darkness of the latitude and the people's life.

“De decembre 1883 à juin 1884 Van Gogh s’applique à rendre cette image des tisserand brabançons qui fromaient un quart de la population de Nuenen; ils les représente à leur metier, maniant leur rouet ou leur bonbines.”⁶²

Wever bij een open raampje (Weaver with an open Window). 1884, Bayerische Staatsgemalde-sammlung Neue Pinakotek. This is one of a series of paintings by Van Gogh of men involved in weaving. All three paintings are painted in the limited palette of Van Gogh's early period; almost everything in the painting is in tones of brown. This painting is only relieved by the landscape out the open window, which affords a bit of green. The man is intent on his task, his head bent to his work. Light falls on the completed fabric; at least it offers a bit of hope.

Tisserand à son Métier. 1884, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. The weaver sits inside his huge weaving loom, pipe in mouth and intent on his work. This is a broad loom and we can see the white warp threads. Van Gogh has emphasized the massiveness of the machine.

Tisserand à son Métier. 1884, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. This is another of the series Van Gogh sketched reacting to the grimness of the weavers' lives. This time the weaver faces to the left, but the image is much the same as the sketch by the same name above.

Viell Homme en Train de Bobiner. 1884, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. More of the same series. This time the man is reeling thread upon a bobbin. In front of him sits a swift; a window lights his work.

Naaiende Vrouw (Woman Sewing). 1885, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. This painting is from Van Gogh's early dark period. We see in silhouette a woman seated in front of a window. She wears black; the other colors of the painting are browns and very greyed out blues and greens. Her features are indistinguishable. However light falls on her hands and the work she is doing. Most prominent in the picture are the ladder-backed chair in which she sits, and the windowpanes behind her.

La Veillée (the Evening) (d'après Millet). Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. In this painting Van Gogh has begun to develop his loose brushwork with which he is most identified.

“La Veillé fait partie d’une série de quatre toiles d’après Millet intitulées *Heures de la journée.*”⁶³

⁶² *Van Gogh au Musée Van Gogh.* De Leeuw, Ronald. Zwolle: Editions Waanders, 1995, p. 26.

⁶³ De Leeuw, *Ibid.*, p. 139.

Van Gogh has pictured a couple seated by a single lamp. The man, whose back is to us, appears to play the violin; the woman is busy with her sewing. A child is sleeping on the far side of the lamp. Next to the man are a few small logs for the fireplace; the fireplace itself is to his left. In it stands a small cat. The rays from the lamp radiate across the floor, broken only by the shadows of the couple and the basket of wood. This painting is part of a series that depict different times of the day.

Sien Sewing. 1883, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen. This is a pencil and chalk sketch of Sien, who was Van Gogh's mistress while he lived in France. She is shown in profile, her head tilted to the sewing in her hands. Her back does not touch the straight-backed chair, and she has a stern look on her face.

“Seamstress was her nominal occupation, and she did repair Vincent's clothes. In her capacity as muse Sien evoked those qualities of poverty and sadness that Van Gogh valued.⁶⁴

Seamstresses (after Edouard Frère). Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. This very detailed engraving shows two women bent to their sewing. They sit by a window, surrounded by a table heaped with sewing, and two baskets overflowing with even more tasks for them to tackle.

H. Carl Moon

Carl Moon was a prolific producer of American southwestern art. The subjects of his paintings were almost universally Native American, often engaged in their crafts. Among these are making pottery, crafting arrows, bringing in corn, tending children, and weaving. His works chronicle the lives of the Native American of the mid 20th century and give an idealized insight into it, as all his subjects are glowing with health and beauty, and set in the most picturesque of environments.

Navajo Weaver. 1937-43, Smithsonian American Art Museum. Moon has depicted a Navajo woman engaged in one of her nation's most lucrative endeavors—the making of beautiful rugs for sale to the tourists. She is working out of doors and we see the vast desert spread out beside her, with two buttes in the distance. The sky is crisp blue, broken with a few fleecy clouds. A fellow tribe member seems to be working half hidden behind her loom.

Hopi Woman Weaving Plaques. 1937-43, Smithsonian American Art Museum. Another characteristic work of Moon, this time a young Hopi Woman is sewing with grass or reeds, making plaques for ceremonial use and trade. A Hopi water jar sits beside her; she is ensconced on a sheepskin. Her hair is done in the stereotypical Native American fashion, and her feet are clad in short boots. Around her neck she wears silver beads, as well as a silver bracelet on her wrist. The mood is peaceful and serene—a soft golden light falls across her placid face and busy hands.

⁶⁴ *Van Gogh Face to Face*. Keyes, George, et al. Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 2000, p. 72.



Carl Moon. Hopi Weaver. oil on canvas, 30 x 24 in. 1985.66.383, 327. Smithsonian American Art Museum. Gift of Mrs. Florence O.R. Lang.

Hopi Weaver. 1937-43, Smithsonian American Art Museum. A young Native American man sits with his back to the viewer, intent on creating a colorful rug. The rug hangs from a thin branch; the weaver sits on top of a sheepskin. Besides the pattern of the completed section of the rug there are balls and hanks of yarn, and colorful corn hangs in one corner of the painting. Additionally, a piece of Hopi pottery adds to the southwestern atmosphere.

I. William Margretson

Last Minute Stitch. 1915. In this British Impressionist painting a woman sits on a window seat, ready to go out, and yet she must catch up the hem of her salmon colored dress. We are treated to a view of her beautiful eyelet embroidered petticoats, lace hosiery, and stylish shoes. She also wears a black straw hat trimmed with flowers that match the dress. The environment is mostly white—the walls, the curtains, the flowers, and the cushions on the window seat. Only the patchwork quilt betrays some other color.

J. Romare Bearden

The Return of Ulysses. 1976, Smithsonian American Art Museum. Once again the theme of Ulysses and his faithful wife Penelope is revisited, this time rendered in almost Fauve like colors and style. Penelope sits at the loom, with a significant amount of her tapestry complete. Ulysses's ship is moored right outside her window, and he and his men are rushing in to greet her. Bright colors abound. This is definitely painted in the modern style; nevertheless the artist evokes a familiar and satisfying tale for his composition.



Romare Bearden, The Return of Ulysses. Serigraph on paper 18-1/2 x 22-1/2 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum. Gift of the Brandywine Graphic Workshop, 1976, Romare Bearden/Brandywine Workshop 1976.106.1.

Chapter 8

Other 19th century European paintings (not Impressionists)

A. Jean François Millet

“Jean-François Millet was the most famous painter of rural life in 19th century France. Although renowned as a painter some of Millet’s best works are his drawings, which invest the ordinary with depth and dignity.”⁶⁵

He moved to the village Barbizon in 1849 and settled in with other painters who were concentrating on painting landscapes in a realistic fashion. This movement in art was a reaction to the Romantic era, and the subjects of the artwork were often peasants or other ordinary people engaged in mundane activities. This group of painters had influence in later years on the Impressionists.

Millet was a prolific painter and his scenes were often tinged with sadness and melancholy. The subjects were mostly peasants and he has produced a large body of work depicting women engaged in the needlearts.

Knitting Lesson I. c. 1854, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In this painting we see a stocky peasant woman bent over her young daughter teaching her how to knit. They sit close to a window for the light it affords. Both figures are clothed plainly but at least their garments are in color: the woman’s jacket is a salmon pink; the child wears a blue dress. On the wall to the rear we see linens folded on a bureau and tin cups hanging on the wall. The windowsill holds the knitting basket; its contents are first to catch the light, which also illuminates the faces of the mother and child.

Knitting Lesson II. c. 1860, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This is almost the identical scene as Knitting Lesson I, although the figures are clad somewhat differently. However, more interest has been added: there is more detail in the tiles of the floor; there is a coffee pot on the bureau next to the folded linens, some scraps of yarn lie on the floor at the feet of the child, and most engagingly, a small white kitten is drinking from a puddle of milk. Even the faces of the figures are “prettier.”

Sewing Lesson. 1874, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This is probably an unfinished painting, although Millet may have been attempting to emulate the Impressionist style. A peasant woman holds a baby while instructing her older daughter in the fine art of sewing. The child sits with her back to the open window through which we see the nearby field; a man, probably the husband/father is busy a tilling the soil. A brazen squirrel is perched on the windowsill, but

⁶⁵ Beckett, p. 281.

all three figures seem oblivious to his presence. Emphasis is on the white cloth the child holds; it is the brightest object in the painting.

Knitting Lesson. 1869, St. Louis Museum of Art. Millet revisits this theme once again. This is a close up of the two figures. Real pathos shows on the faces of the two figures, particularly the mother who seems so intent and earnest, with one arm embracing her child. We see clearly the four needles that the young girl holds; she is knitting a sock, which is no easy task, especially for one so young. Light falls on their solemn faces evoking real empathy for their lot in life.



Jean François Millet, *The Knitting Lesson*. 1869, Oil on canvas, St. Louis Art Museum.

Young Woman Spinning. 1850-52, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This is a crayon sketch of a young woman sitting beside a large spinning wheel. Her back is to us and she is bent to her demanding task. Her right hand turns the wheel while her left guides the yarn onto a spindle. There is much energy and motion in this preliminary sketch of Millet's.

Seated Spinner (Emélie Millet). 1854, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This is a painting of Millet's young wife Emélie who is seated at a spinning wheel. Light floods the white of her apron, her sleeve, her cap and also the white and red stripes of the spindle. Full detail is given to the spinning wheel. Millet includes a note of homely humor: a cat peeps beneath Emélie's chair.

Standing Spinner. 1850-55, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Millet depicts a young woman standing beside an enormous spinning wheel; she is dwarfed by comparison. She bends slightly to guide the yarn onto the spindle, while with her right hand she continues to turn the wheel. She is plainly garbed in a long skirt covered with an apron; her red vest brightens the scene. Her head is covered with a kerchief. A basket under the wheel contains the supply of wool ready for spinning. The whole scene is illuminated from above with special emphasis on the spinner's face, and on the spindle of yarn.

Shepherdess Knitting Outside the Village of Barbizon. 1860-62, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This is a pastel and a fairly complex scene. A shepherdess half-sits on a rock; she is absorbed in her knitting; her staff leans against the same large rock. She wears a heavy blue cloak over her peasant dress. In the distance we see farmhouses and barns with their red-orange roofs; these reiterate the color of her kerchief. Small haystacks are in the midground. We cannot see the woman's flock but the dog is on alert; we see him only from the rear as he watches for predators.

La Tricoteuse. 1852, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, France. Millet revisits a similar theme. Here the shepherdess sits on a small hillock and is concentrating on her knitting. A shepherdess's staff lies propped next to her. She is in the shade of a large bush, but rays of sunlight fall on her face, right shoulder and on her knitting. There is perhaps a suggestion of a grey sheep to her left; it looks away from the viewer toward the hint of a building in the distance.

Woman Sewing Beside a Window. 1855-56, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This is a sketch by Millet; his sketches were considered to be quite powerful renditions of peasant life. In this sketch we see the woman with the requisite kerchief sitting beside a window, her head bent to the task at hand. She sews on some indeterminate garment, but we have seen this setting before; behind her is the bureau and above it hang the tin cups of Knitting Lesson I.

La Coseuse. Réunion des Musées Nationaux, France. Again Millet has painted a peasant woman clad in simple clothing with a kerchief on her head. She works on a white blouse and we can see clearly the details of her sewing. She wears a thimble on her right hand, a wedding ring on her left. Her scissors are attached to a red ribbon, which then hangs from the back of the chair in which she sits. Her face is in shadow—a device of Millet to indicate an oppressive atmosphere.

Women Sewing By lamplight (*La veillée*). 1853-54. In this painting we see two women concentrating on their sewing. Their heads are bent to the task; their fingers are busy; their features are indistinct. A small oil lamp on the wall affords their only light, although it illuminates the garment one woman works on. Behind her is a bed tucked into a nook. A small table holds some sewing accoutrements. The atmosphere is tranquil, but these women cannot afford to waste any time on idle moments.

Woman Sewing beside Her Sleeping Child. 1858-62, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Here also a peasant woman wastes no time. She sits at the bedside of her child; the scene is lit by only a small oil lamp above the child's bed. The light from the lamp illuminates her face and the stitching she holds. The mood is quiet; the woman is industrious.

B. Harriet Backer

Harriet Backer was from a well-to-do Norwegian family and devoted much of her energies to painting detailed interiors, especially of churches.

“Backer had been greatly impressed by an 1883 Monet exhibition and applied the same attention to the light and color of each painted folk art panel or post that the master Impressionist did to haystacks and poplars.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ *Women Artists*. Barlow, Margaret. NY: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 1999, p. 151.

Sewing by Lamplight. 1870, Nasjongalleriet, Oslo. A woman sits intent on threading her needle, although there appears to be a sewing machine on the table in front of her. However, this may be the lamp referred to in the title of the painting. Nevertheless, this table seems to be outfitted with the mechanism which operates a sewing machine. A large book or perhaps a box sits on the sewing table. The background is merely long wide vertical stripes of orange and blue; the blue appears to be paneling; the orange reflects light. Perhaps the swatch of blue on the woman's lap is the object to be sewn.

Sewing By Lamplight. 1890, Bergen Rasmus Meyers Samlinger. At first I thought this slide was mislabeled because the woman in the painting appears to be reading, not sewing. And there is already another painting with the same name (see above). However this painting is given a different date, and a different collection. Nevertheless, the woman still appears to be reading, unless the white she holds in her hand is a piece of fabric. The sparsely furnished interior reveals a blue wall with a window with a puffy white valence, a narrow black stove, a straight chair and a picture above it. The model sits at a table bent over her book or sewing; a small lamp illuminates the object in her hand, and her face.

Interior with Woman Sewing. 1883, Najonalgalleriet, Oslo. This is a detailed interior scene with a multitude of furnishings explicitly depicted. A young woman clad in black with a soft lacy white collar sits in front of a fireplace. She works on her sewing, which is also white. She assumes the characteristic stitcher's stance: her head is bent to her task, her hands are raised to mid bosom level. A red desk brightens the scene immensely; there are also two blue seated chairs, with a large plant between them. It is this plant that catches most of the light from the window. In the mirror over the fireplace we see the reflection of two paintings on the invisible wall opposite. Another painting hangs over the desk and is prominently lit. On the floor sits a small footstool from which have fallen the sewing tools which are scattered about.

C. Adolphe-William Bouguereau

Bouguereau was a painter of the 19th century France. He began his career with monumental classical painting, the kind only suitable for public spaces, but "...Bouguereau began as early as 1851 to paint a kind of picture that is not easily categorized but is nonetheless immediately appealing."⁶⁷

These paintings tend to be somewhat sentimentalized genre paintings, which were more marketable to middle class consumers and the foreign (American) market. These included secularized religious scenes such as mothers and children, shepherds and shepherdesses, idealized Italian peasants, idealized nudes, and classicized themes.

The Young Seamstress. 1898, Felix Rosentheil's Widow and Sons Ltd., London. Another peasant girl, a child really, is shown seated on a stone step. She is clad in a black skirt and white peasant blouse. A large orangeish cloth is draped across the lap; she clutches it with her

⁶⁷ *Bouguereau*. Wissman, Fronia E. San Francisco: Pomegranate Artbooks, 1996., p. 31.

left hand, as her right is poised with needle and thimble, as if caught mid-stitch. Her hair is somewhat unkempt and her gaze is averted; she seems lost in thought.

Tricoteuse. 1879, Felix Rosentheil's Widow and Son, Ltd., London.

This young girl leans against a stone wall; we can catch a glimpse of a medieval town just over her right shoulder. Her dark hair is parted down the middle and stuck behind her ears. She is simply clothed, except for a bright and cheerful red scarf, which is richly woven. In her hand she appears to be knitting a long white stocking. The setting, her coloring, and the scarf suggest she is perhaps Spanish, in spite of the French title of this painting.

Needle and Thread. 1893, Hammer Galleries, NY.

Bouguereau has painted another peasant girl sitting on a block of stone. She wears a plain black skirt and white blouse, plus a grey laced up girdle. Her feet are bare. A flowered scarf is loosely knotted about her shoulders. A piece of black cloth lies across her lap. She holds a needle in her right hand and her left stretches out the thread across her body as she regards the viewer directly. She is framed by lush green foliage; delicate star-shaped leaves soften the square lines of the stone on which she sits.

The Knitting Girl. 1869, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha Nebraska.

A peasant girl perches on an iron fence, idly knitting. She is clothed in peasant garb with a kerchief on her head. Her feet are bare. Her eyes do not engage ours; rather they are averted to look at something we cannot see. She is embraced by a large tree and in the background the sun shines on a small pond. Light also bathes the smooth skin of her arms and face.

The Pre-Raphaelites

“The Pre-Raphaelites were a group of English artists who rejected the studio conventions of their day and harked back to medieval simplicities.”⁶⁸

Pre-Raphaelites adopted a high moral stance that embraced a sometimes unwieldy combination of symbolism and realism. They painted only serious—usually religious or romantic—subjects and their style was clear and sharply focused.⁶⁹



Adolphe-William Bouguereau, *The Knitting Girl (Tricoteuse)*, 1869, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha NE JAM 1931.106.

⁶⁸ Beckett, p. 274.

⁶⁹ Beckett, p. 277.

An earlier English art group formed in 1848 to restore art to the “purity” of Italian art before Raphael. It included the painters W. H. Hunt, J. E. Millais, and G. Rossetti.⁷⁰

D. John Everett Millais

Mariana. 1851, Tate Gallery of Art, London. “In John Everett Millais’ painting Mariana the solitary maiden stands by her embroidery frame waiting for her knight’s return to the moated grange.

Inspired by Tennyson’s poem ‘Mariana’ with its haunting refrain: I am weary, weary, I wish that I were dead’ the painting brought Mariana’s sentiments vividly to life.”⁷¹

Mariana stands in front of her tapestry frame, having arisen from her crimson bench. She stretches her back and closes her eyes, obviously weary of the task at hand. Sexual tension is apparent in her stance. The tapestry is almost finished, but leaves have blown in through the window, signifying that her task is perhaps unfinishable.



John Evert Millais. Mariana. Oil on wood (mahogany).Tate Gallery of Art #TO7553 5497 x 495 mm. Accepted by H.M. government in lieu of tax and allocatd to the Tate Gallery,

E. William Holman Hunt

The Lady of Shalott. Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT.

“Holman Hunt’s The Lady of Shalott illustrates Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poetic rendition of an Arthurian legend. The Lady sits weaving a tapestry of the world as it is reflected in her mirror. Although forbidden to neglect her work and look out the window, she yields to temptation to watch the handsome Lancelot ride by; the mirror cracks and the thread flies out of the loom to entangle her—signifying the fatal curse she has brought on herself.”⁷²

In this Pre-Raphaelite painting Hunt has paid exquisite attention to detail in his painting. The Lady is clothed in an elaborate dress with a highly patterned blouse and delicate embroidery on her petticoat. The details of the floor are carefully rendered; in the background we see paintings of the Virgin Mary and of Hercules. An elegant coffee set sits on a small table. The

⁷⁰ Strickland, p. 90.

⁷¹ *The Embroiderer’s Story.* Beck, Thomasina. Newton: David and Charles, 1995, p. 98.

⁷² *The World of Whistler.* Prideaux, Tom. New York: Time Life Library of Art, 1970, p. 72.

lady is entwined in the threads of her tapestry. The famous mirror is in the background; in its reflection we see her tapestry and the scene outside with river and the fair Lancelot.

F. Dante Gabriel Rossetti

The Girlhood of Mary Virgin. 1849, Tate Gallery of Art, London.

In this painting Rossetti depicts the young girl Mary being instructed in the art of embroidery by her mother, Ste. Anne. A small angel stands holding a lily, which is the subject of Mary 's embroidery. The angel is a precursor of the Annunciation visit by Gabriel, and the lily, which is Joseph's symbol, no doubt represents her future as a wife. St. Joachim is outside the window harvesting fruit from a tree. A cross shape in front of the window is a precursor of the crucifixion, as is the red cloth draped on the windowsill.

“Rossetti felt that conventional treatments of the theme of the Virgin's education, showing her learning to read, were “incompatible with these times,” so he painted her instead learning to embroider; ...”⁷³

“The nineteenth century feminine ideal, represented by Mary embroidering a lily, show the extent to which embroidery has become associated with their concept of femininity; as purity and submissiveness.”⁷⁴



Dante Gabriel Rossetti. *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* 1848-49. Tate Gallery of Art # NO4872
Oil on canvas.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁷⁴ *The Subversive Stitch*. Parker, Roszika. London: The Women's Press Limited, 1984, p. 30.

G. John William Waterhouse

Waterhouse has been wrongly called Pre-Raphaelite, but he was a Romantic Classicist: he had the Northerner's love of legend and mystery but his Italian birth lent a warm personality to his rendering of the classical myths. "...Waterhouse's (girls) are individual, sensitive and warm-blooded: they are in fact the living models of his studio, with their own youth and their inimitable combination of modesty and sexuality imbued with the painter's creative imagination."⁷⁵

'I am Half-Sick of Shadows' said The Lady of Shalott. 1916, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

This is the third in a series of paintings by Waterhouse referring to the poem by Tennyson (see appendix). In it the Lady of Shalott was doomed to view life outside her window on the castle of Camelot only through the reflections in her mirror. One day when Lancelot rode by she could bear it no longer and she dared to look out the window. The curse was then upon her and she left the tower to float to her doom in a small boat on the river.



The Lady is shown seated at her tapestry frame. She is garbed in red, a golden belt about her waist. The tapestry is partially finished; balls of yarn litter the floor, shuttles hang from the loom, and a large swift sits at her side. Her hands are clasped behind her head as though weary of her task and her fate. Through the window we see the castle of Camelot in the distance, a bridge going to it, and young lovers walking along the river.

The Lady of Shalott. 1894, City Art Gallery, Leeds, England.

"...It was clearly the specific incident rather than the unfolding narrative which enthralled him, and this picture moves back from that of 1888 to the climactic moment of the poem. Condemned for so long to the watery reflected image, the Lady of Shalott breaks out to life—and to death—as Sir Lancelot 'flashed into the crystal mirror'.⁷⁶

Penelope and the Suitors. 1912, Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museum.

This is a complex painting depicting Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, busy at her tapestry. She is garbed in bright red and sits before her tapestry frame. She holds her shuttle in her left hand while she bites the thread with her teeth. Ladies-in-waiting face her, and through the

'I am Half-Sick of Shadows' said The Lady of Shalott, 1916; John William Waterhouse. Oil on canvas 100.3 x 73.7 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of Mrs. Phillip B. Jackson, 1971.

⁷⁵ J. W. Waterhouse. Hobson, Anthony. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1989, p. 9.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52-53.

window we see the sparkling white buildings of ancient Greece. Through the windows behind her lean numerous suitors plying her with flowers and jewels and music; these handsome youths will meet only frustration as she patiently picks out her stitching every night so as to delay her marriage in hopes of her husband's return. Waterhouse has painted this work with exquisite attention to detail; the low walls show paintings of Greek victories, and an elaborate carpet covers the floor.

Fair Rosamond. 1917, Christies, London.

“Fair Rosamond foresees the sad culmination of another medieval tale, the true story of Lord Clifford's daughter, the beloved of King Henry II. From the window of her secret house she looks for his coming, but the queen, appearing at the curtained entrance, has followed ‘a clue of thredde’ through the surrounding maze and, as the chronicler Highden wrote about 1350, ‘so dealt with her that she lived not long after.’ The costume, the embroidery, and the tapestry depicting knightly pageantry fit perfectly, as always into the precise geometry of the architecture.”⁷⁷

In this painting we see Rosamond garbed in blue with a white veil on her head. She leans out the window hoping for a glimpse of her beloved Henry II. Her beautiful long red hair hangs in a braid down her back. We can see her tapestry on a frame over her shoulder, and a ball of yarn on the chair in front. The queen peeks through the curtains, a thread trailing from her hand to the tapestry.

Although not by a Pre-Raphaelite this painting seems to fit here in the discussion by reasons of style and theme.

H Sidney Meteyard

I am Half Sick of Shadows. 1913, private collection.

This is another depiction of the very popular Lady of Shalott by British artist Sidney Meteyard. Here the Lady wears a diaphanous blue gown with a shawl of a similar color. She slumps against the cushions of her chair and regards her needlework, which depicts the fair Lancelot, through almost closed eyes. Malaise is the mood of this painting. To the Lady's left is the legendary mirror, which reflects the lovers on the path, with the castle of Camelot in the distance. Her basket of yarns sits at her side and the Lady is surrounded by white blossoms everywhere: a symbol of her virginal purity perhaps.

I . Abraham Soloman

The Lion in Love. 1858, Bridgman Art Library, London.

This hilarious painting depicts a young woman with her elaborate embroidery frame slouching coyly black on a flamboyant sofa. Her suitor who looks old enough to be her father tries valiantly to thread her needle, a basket of yarns in his lap. A Cupid in the mirror above aims straight at this gentleman and there is a little dog, the symbol of constancy, next to the

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

embroidery frame. This is a colorful complex painting but its subject matter says much about the time in which it was painted.

J. Other Artists

Needlework, Reading, and Writing by John Harden, 1829. Abbott Hall Art Gallery.

In this painting the family of the artist is depicted as engaged in the accomplishments of the day. One woman is pictured writing a letter on a portable writing desk; another works at her tapestry frame, a third is sewing on something delicate, and the youngest girl holds her cat. The young man of the family reads (aloud?). Together they proclaim how educated and accomplished the family constellation is.

Lady Sewing by William Henry Hunt. 1830, Manchester City Art Gallery.

This is a simple painting of a young woman stitching on something almost unseen in her hands. If we look beneath her and the chair we can see she is making a band of lace. She is clad in a red striped red dress with voluminous white sheer sleeves, and sits slightly slouched in her chair, her feet extended in front of her and resting on a low footstool. Her hair is arranged in an “up-do” with carefully arranged curls framing her face. The interior appears to be upper middle class: there is good wallpaper on the wall and a Persian carpet on the floor. Her red sewing box sits beside her, open and in use. A halo of light emphasizes her face, and especially her hands and needlework.

Lady in Grey by Sir Daniel Macnee. 1859, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Here an earnest young woman clothed in a sober grey gown with white collar and black bow looks intently into the eyes of the viewer. She holds in her hand her sewing; her needle is poised in mid-stitch. She is seated outdoors and the background reveals the sun on a low wall, some flowers and a path leading into the woods. The sunlight also falls on her face and her hands; the sewing is emphasized by this intense sunlight.

Evening Thoughts by Robert Herdman. 1864, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

A young girl sits in the field; she must be a shepherdess as we see the sheep in the background. Her clothes are simple: a red skirt and a green striped jacket. A white blouse peeks out above the bodice of her dress. Her face is lovely and contemplative; she is lost in her thoughts, as the title suggests. It is only upon close examination that one discovers that in her lap, mostly hidden under her hands, is her knitting.

The Three Orphans by Frederick Daniel Hard. 1860, York City Art Gallery.

Three young people sit in this cheerful interior of an English cottage. An older girl attends to her two little charges; the titles suggest she is perhaps an older sister. She has her sewing in her lap, and her sewing box rests on the red cloth that drapes the table. The other two much smaller children play in front of the fireplace. Close attention is paid to the interior of the room, it is very specific in detail. From the window we can see a typical English town of the era. The mood is one of warmth and security.

A Welsh Interior by Edward John Cobbett. 1856, York City Art Gallery.

Three young girls sit in a humble attic. The two older ones are busy at their needlework; the youngest appears ready for a nap. The girls are simply clad but have the bloom of youth on their cheeks.

The Crochet Worker by William Etty. York City Art Gallery.

This painting is mostly worked in complementary colors of red and green. The model wears a green jacket and sports a red scarf around her neck. Her shiny dark hair is backlit by more red. Light falls on her face and on the ivory crochet hook in her hand. This is simple subject matter, in somewhat the Impressionist style.

Florence Nightingale and her Sister Parthenope by William White. 1836, National Portrait Gallery, London.

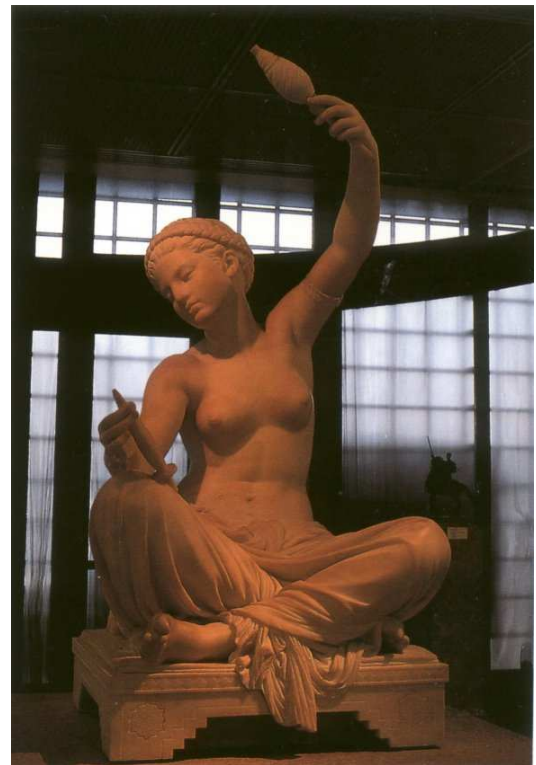
“Florence Nightingale considered that embroidery was symptomatic of the restraints imposed on women by the feminine ideal.”⁷⁸

One sister—we know not which but it is probably Parthenope—sits demurely working on her embroidery while the other holds a book in her hands. Once again this demonstrates the nineteenth century ideal that women should be a little learned but mostly submissive and attentive to their embroidery. The sister with the book regards the viewer unblinkingly—this is probably the assertive Florence.

Jeune Fille de Mégare by Louis-Ernest Barrias.

1867-70, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

This is a beautiful marble statue about 4 feet in height. It depicts a young girl seated cross-legged on a pedestal. Her left arm is raised above her head with spindle in hand; the right hand holds the distaff upon which the yarn is spun. Her head is tilted toward the right. The lower half of her body is draped with a cloth; its folds and pleats are beautifully rendered. She is nude from the hips up. Her hair is braided around her head. This is a classical statue in the Greek tradition, although somewhat contemporary in its execution.



Louis-Ernest Barrias. Jeune Fille de Mégare 1867-70 Statue en Marbre. 1.26 x .63 x .66 m Acquis au Salon de 1870 Musée d’Orsay – Paris.

⁷⁸ Parker, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

Chapter 9

European paintings of the 18th century (not Impressionists)

A. Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin



Jean-Baptiste Chardin, 1699-1779. French
Mother and child with Needlework. 49 x 59
cm. Musée de Louvre, Paris.

Chardin is categorized as “Rococo” only by date, as it were. Despite his charming choice of subjects, frequently painting small children and young servants, he did not have it in him to create other than from his depth.”⁷⁹

Chardin is counted as one of the foremost painters of the early 18th century and is considered to be one of the greatest still life painters. However he is also noted for his domestic scenes that have moralistic overtones.

Mother and Child with Needlework (La mère laborieuse). No date, Musée de Louvre, Paris. This painting depicts a mother and child in their home by the fireplace. Both wear long voluminous aprons, which cover their skirts, and it’s difficult to tell if the woman’s dress is elegant or not.

However their status is perhaps betrayed by the shoes the mother wears: colorful high heels. In front of them sits a large swift; next to the mother is a sewing box with several sewing implements stuck in its pincushion top. A little dog lies next to the woman—once again a symbol of constancy. Both mother and child are intent on the piece of needlework, which they examine closely. Light shines on both females emphasizing the close relationship between mother and daughter, and celebrating the virtues of domesticity and close knit family life.

B. Françoise Duparc

Françoise Duparc painted in the late 18th century. She spent time in Paris and London, but is most closely associated with Marseilles.

⁷⁹ Beckett, 1994, p. 230.

“Unlike most French genre pictures of the time, Duparc’s neither entertain nor moralize. Instead, influenced by seventeenth century Dutch genre painting, she portrayed with great dignity the everyday tasks of working-class people—knitting, carrying bundles, selling tea.”⁸⁰

After the French Revolution there was an upsurge of interest in sentimental domestic paintings.⁸¹

Woman Knitting. No date, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseilles.

In this quiet genre painting we see a three-quarters view of a working class woman busy at her knitting. However the product seems to be a sewn garment and we cannot see knitting needles. There is a bit of a chest of drawers nearby and a small basket on it contains some yarn. Light glances off her face and hands, illuminating her jacket and the cloth she is sewing.

C. Philip Mercier

A Girl Sewing. 1750, Tate Gallery of Art, London.

In this painting a middle class young girl sits intent on her hemming. Her dress is green with blue stripes and has wide ruffled cuffs, which flow down gracefully from her slender arms. Her head is covered with a ruffled cap. Next to her a child clings to her soulfully sucking her thumb. The child’s cheek is very flushed; perhaps indicating impending illness. By the youth of the older girl we must presume these two are sisters. Light emphasizes the younger child’s face and the sewing.

D. Jacques-Louis David

“Jacques-Louis David’s style is nobly classical.”⁸² David was a French painter who worked in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. He is well known for his involvement in the French Revolution and was imbued by its new ideals of equality and liberty. He is noted early in his career for his Neoclassical painting, particularly *The Oath of the Horatii*, and later for his portraiture.

Madame De Pastoret and Her Son. 1791-92, Art Institute of Chicago.

Against a very plain background a beautiful young woman sits, with her right hand poised to take a stitch. She wears a simple white muslin dress and



Jacques-Louis David. *Madame de Pastoret and Her Son*, 1791- mid. 1792 , oil on canvas, 129.8 x 96.6 cm. Clyde M Carr Rund and Major Acquisitions Endowment, 1967.228 ©the Art Institute of Chicago, All Rights Reserved.

⁸⁰ Heller, p. 66.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁸² Beckett, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

her hair is arranged naturally. This simplicity is probably a reaction to the French Revolution which took place two years earlier. Next to her is a small baby's bed and in it we can see the head of her sleeping son. The child's hair echoes that of his mother. If you look closely you can notice that Madame does not hold a needle, nor is there a thread between her hand and the cloth. Evidently Madame Pastoret and David had a falling out and he never completed the portrait, according to the Art Institute of Chicago. There is no doubt because of her posture and particularly the position of her fingers that Madame is sewing.

E. François-Hubert Drouais



François-Hubert Drouais. Madame de Pompadour, 1762-63, oil on canvas 217 x 156.8 cm. National Gallery, London.

Madame de Pompadour. 1763-63, National Gallery, London.

This fabulous painting of Mme de Pompadour occupies a very prominent place in the collection of the National Gallery in London. One can not miss it as it stands alone on a very conspicuous wall as one enters its gallery. Mme de Pompadour was the mistress of Louis XV of France.

“Louis XV found in her what he had always desired. The apartment of his mistress was a refuge for him: he came there to find peace, good humor, everything which could help him to dissipate his doubts, his concerns, his sadness.”⁸³

Mme de Pompadour was also a most powerful person, cultivating the arts and also men of letters—the major figures of the enlightenment. She was very responsible for the appointment of many of the ministers under Louis XV. She was probably the most influential person on the king, and some say she was the de facto ruler of France.

The painting by Drouais shows a middle aged (she only lived to 41) Madame de Pompadour seated at her embroidery frame—a very elaborate one. Her fabulous gown billows out for all to see; it is richly embroidered with flowers and trimmed with massive amounts of lace at the hem and the elbow length sleeves. She wears a lace kerchief about her head. All around her is elegant furniture, a bookcase lavishly trimmed in gold, and a very elegant sewing table. A small black dog hops up on a chair to try to distract her attention. This is a symbol of her devotion to the King.

F. Benjamin West

“The first American-born painter to win international acclaim was Benjamin West (1738-1820) whose work summed up the Neoclassic style.”⁸⁴ He is best known for his paintings of historical subjects.

Miss Anne Eliza Morrill at her embroidery frame. 1773-8, private collection, Sir Andrew Morrill.

In this portrait an unmarried woman “of a certain age” sits at her embroidery frame, idly fingering a piece of yarn which trails from its ball. Behind the lady heavy dark red draperies are held aloft by an elaborate tassel and from the window we can see a sunlit sky. Miss Morrill wears a light red dress of taffeta with lots of ruffles and ruching and bows and buttons; at her neck and wrists are bits of elegant lace. She regards the viewer with a half smile. Her hair is salt and pepper grey, arranged in a complicated style and swept back to reveal her aristocratic forehead and long elegant nose. This woman is obviously upper class; still she engages herself with needlework, most likely of the decorative sort.

G. Jean-Baptiste Greuze

Portrait of Marie-Angelique Gougenot de Croissy. 1757, New Orleans Museum of Art.

“This portrait displays the straightforward interpretation Greuze gave his sitters. Mme. Gougenot de Croissy’s personality is conveyed by her direct gaze, charming smile and subtle tilt of the head. Greuze’s superb painterly technique is evident in the various textures rendered in her costume, especially that of the lace for which he was famous. The stylish young woman

⁸³*The Great Royal Favorites.* De Wismes, Baron Armel. Nantes: Artaud Frères Publication, n.d., p. 48.

⁸⁴ Strickland, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

holds a *navette* or decorative shuttle around which she winds her knotted string. This activity was done in public by fashionable ladies and had no function other than to emblematically represent female diligence.”⁸⁵

H. Sir Joshua Reynolds

Joshua Reynolds, who was knighted for his great success as a portrait painter ... was decidedly an intellectual. From early on in his training, Reynolds had immersed himself in the art of the Renaissance and he shared an interest in antiquity with the Italian and French Neoclassical artists.⁸⁶

Ironically, in his best portraits Reynolds ignore his own rules. Instead of idealizing what he termed ‘deficiencies and deformities,’ he relied on an intimate, direct style to capture the sitter’s personality.⁸⁷

Anne, Second Countess of Albemarle.

National Gallery, London.

This is a painting of an elegant upper class, middle aged woman. She is gowned elegantly in a dark blue brocade dress; it has been embellished with complex pleating at the hem. Her wide lace cuffs flow from her elbows and she is wrapped in a black velvet cloak which also has a hood. She is seated on a red velvet upright chair; there is no slouching for this fine lady. A red drapery hangs behind her. On the simple table next to her are her sewing basket and scissors. She holds in her hand a tatting shuttle and the ball of thread escapes on her lap. Light falls across her right arm and both hands and across her face. Although she shows no sign of humor her gaze is direct and assured. Reynolds has refrained from idealizing this woman, making her all the more real to future generations.



Sir Joshua Reynolds, Anne, Countess of Albemarle. Oil on canvas 126.9 x 101 cm, National Gallery, London.

⁸⁵ *French Paintings of Three Centuries from the New Orleans Museum of Art*. New Orleans: New Orleans Museum of Art, 1991, p. 30.

⁸⁶ Beckett, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

⁸⁷ Strickland, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

The Ladies Waldegrave. c. 1780, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

This painting depicts the three much beloved nieces of Horace Walpole, an elegant letter writer and ardent admirer of needlework. The three young women, their hair powdered in the fashion of the time, are pictured as the Three Graces but engaged in their needlework. All three young women wear muslin gowns edged in lace. One girl, Lady Horatia, is depicted with her tambour hook posed above the large round tambour frame from which this method of working chain stitch takes its name. Lady Maria sits opposite her holding skein of silk which Lady Laura, the eldest, winds on to a card.”⁸⁸

Red drapery flows behind them, and a window is above the head of Lady Horatia. The girls crowd around a small inlaid table and their elaborate sewing bag and a book sit on the table. It was a departure for Reynolds to show such upper class young women engaged in manual labor; nevertheless this is a charming and appealing portrait and picture into life in the 18th century.



Sir Joshua Reynolds, *The Ladies Waldegrave*, c. 1780. Oil on canvas 143.5 x 168 cm, National Gallery of Scotland NG 2171.

⁸⁸ Beck, p. 86.

I. Gilbert Stuart

Gilbert Stuart was in his day the most famous, sought-after, celebrated, and accomplished portraitist of the infant Republic.⁸⁹ He is best known to Americans for his portraits of George Washington, copies of which surely hang in every school in the nation. Stuart painted dozens of portraits of Washington, as well as both John and Abigail Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James and Dolly Madison and numerous other lesser known people.

Miss Dick and Her Cousin Miss Forster. c. 1792-97, private collection, Winston-Salem. Two young girls, in their early teens most likely, are pictured working at their tambour frame. Both wear white muslin dresses with wide pink sashes. One girl, Miss Dick, turns to regard the viewer; in her hand she holds her needlework and the tambour hook. Her cousin holds the cartoon for the design and we see her in profile. “An inscription on the back of the painting identifies the two girls and includes Stuart’s signature. Painted in Ireland, it is one of his rare double portraits, and also one of the very few showing a sitter in profile.”⁹⁰

This painting was designed to show the lovely young women accomplished and almost ready for marriage.

Mrs. Richard Yates. 1793, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

“With Mrs. Yates Stuart performed a miracle. He gave the same pose as that of Miss Dick in the double portrait he had painted just before leaving Ireland, torso sideways with the left side foremost, head turned toward the viewer. Instead of giving her the willowy slimness of the young Miss Dick Stuart transformed Mrs. Yates’ thinness into a mature and spare elegance that is emphasized by the lovely textures of her dress and the slender hands so gracefully but practically occupied with sewing.”⁹¹

“There is a superb observation in his Mrs. Richard Yates; what other artist would have dared show her vestigial mustache? The gradations of facial color, too, and the alertness to the light glancing and dulling on her dress and cap, are all prophetic of the Impressionists.”⁹²



Gilbert Stuart. Catherine Brass Yates, (Mrs Richard Yates), 1793-94, oil on canvas 30 x 25 in, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, 1940.1.4.

⁸⁹ *Gilbert Stuart*. McLanathan, Richard. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986, front jacket flap.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Mrs. Yates wears a cream satin dress with a large organdy collar. Her bonnet is a large pouf with lace edging and a ribbon around her head from the same fabric as the dress. Mrs. Yates holds her right hand aloft in preparation for taking the next stitch; one can discern the glint of a thimble on her middle finger. This woman definitely gives the impression that although she is wealthy she does not waste time, even while sitting for her portrait.

J. John Singleton Copley

John Singleton Copley is rightly considered to be the first great American painter.

Self taught, he began painting at 15 and had achieved eminence by 21. ... By 1774 Copley had painted 350 portraits, a clear indication of his success. The poses he used were staid, unfrivolous and fairly limited, like the majority of his sitters, but his sense of realism and perception of character are penetrating...⁹³

Eliminating the columns and red curtains used to dress up portraits, he concentrated on the fleeting expressions and gestures that reveal character. Although he painted his well-to-do clients' costumes in detail he focused on the individuality of their faces, where each wrinkle suggested character.⁹⁴

Most Americans will be familiar with Copley's portrait of Paul Revere (1768 -1770 , Fine Arts Museum of Boston). Copley's portrayal of his friend, a shirt-sleeved Paul Revere, was an innovation for its time when a portrait never pictured manual labor. "Yet Copley posed the silversmith holding a teapot he had made, his tools in clear sight."⁹⁵ Copley was an ardent Loyalist and when the fledgling United States defeated the British in the Revolutionary War, Copley moved to England where he continued his painting, influenced by Reynolds, Gainsborough, and West.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin. 1773, Phila. Museum of Art. In this double portrait Copley has portrayed a well-to-do Philadelphia couple. Mr. Mifflin was the aide-de-camp for George Washington during the Revolutionary War and he later became governor of Pennsylvania.

"Here he gazes proudly and proprietarily at his wife, who is shown in an industrious pose, working at a fringe loom. They are clearly a couple who have every reason to be pleased with themselves."⁹⁶

In the background we see classical columns; the Mifflins sit at an elegant table. Mrs. Mifflin's dress is satin with organdy trim and she wears a boutonniere of flowers on her bosom. Mr. Mifflin holds in his hand a letter, which he points right at his wife.



John Singleton Copley, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin, oil on canvas. Phila. Mus. of Art.

⁹³ Dore, p. 44.

⁹⁴ Strickland, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁹⁶ Dore, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

Chapter 10

The Seventeenth Century

In the 17th century the greatest painting was done in the Netherlands. Rubens and Van Dyck lived in Flanders, now Belgium, which was Catholic and dominated by the monarchy--religious art flourished here--while Rembrandt, Hals, and Vermeer lived in the north, now the Netherlands, which was Protestant, independent, and democratic—religious imagery was forbidden. This was the Baroque era; art was grand and sumptuous and ornate. Nevertheless, some of the greatest artists in the history of mankind painted during this time.

A. Rembrandt van Rijn

Anna and the Blind Tobit. National Gallery, London.

This painting by Rembrandt is very dark, mainly executed in tones of brown. The exception is the door through which light flows, illuminating the room with a weak light. The timbers of the ceiling are visible, as is a small fire, surrounded by a copper cooking pot and a water jar. Tobit (Tobias), looking like a true Biblical prophet in his brown robes and long white beard, sits slumped with his chin on his chest, resigned to the blindness that was visited upon him. The light from the door bathes one side of his weary face. His wife Anna sits with a thread in her hand; she was known in the Bible as a weaver.

“And as he was sleeping hot dung out of a swallow’s nest fell upon his eyes, and he was made blind.”⁹⁷ (Tobias 2:10)

“Now Anna his wife went daily to weaving work, and she brought home what she could get for their living by the labor of her hands.”⁹⁸ (Tobias 2:19)

B. Nicolaes Maes

The Lacemaker. 1660-65, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.

Maes has depicted a homey scene: a woman sits intently engaged in her lacemaking. Her child is seated in a high chair next to the woman; neither seems to interact with the other. The room is simply furnished; besides the high chair we see only a table draped in a red cloth. On it sits a simple pitcher. The child’s cup and bowl sit on the floor. The high chair is perhaps the most interesting item. It is closed in from the tray down so we cannot see the child’s legs. However, above his head is a curved motif that almost seems to suggest a crown.

⁹⁷ *The Holy Bible*. Douay Version. Book of Tobias 2:10

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, Book of Tobias 2:19.

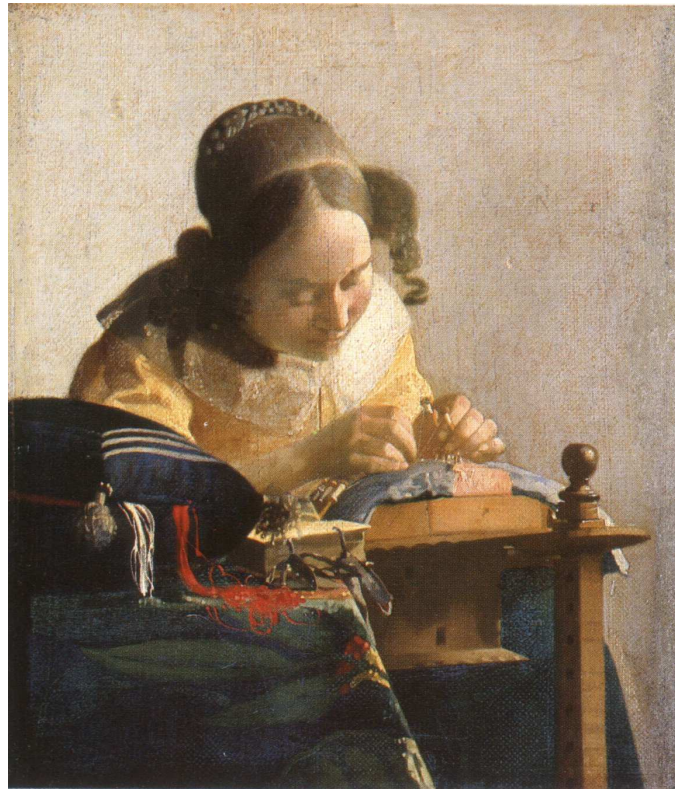
C. Johannes Vermeer

Certainly one of the most esteemed painters of all time, Vermeer lived in Delft in Holland in the mid-seventeenth century. We know very little about his life, his training as an artist, or his travels. He lived only to the age of 43 and left behind a wife, 11 children, and a pile of debts. His oeuvre was very small; it is believed he executed about 42 paintings in his lifetime, but only 35 are known to survive.

The Lacemaker. 1669-70, Musée de Louvre, Paris.

“In this, one of Vermeer’s most beloved paintings, a young lacemaker bends over her work, tautly holding the bobbins and pins essential for her craft. Sitting very close to the foreground, behind a lacemaking table and a large blue sewing cushion, Vermeer’s lacemaker devotes every ounce of her attention to this one activity, while the viewer peers in with equal intensity, mesmerized by her adeptness and artistic skill.”⁹⁹

Light falls on the forehead of the young woman and then on her left hand which is manipulating the bobbins. It also glances off various threads. The woman is dressed in a yellow gown with a wide lace collar. Her hair has been plucked back at the forehead in the style of the day, but there is a braid across the crown of her head, and curled locks hang down over her ears. The mood is serene and tranquil; the woman is industrious but subdued.



Johannes Vermeer, *La Dentellière*, c. 1665. Toile sur bois .24 x .21 m Acquis. 1870, The Louvre.

The Little Street. 1657-58, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

“The Little Street is an intimate work, both in scale and subject matter. Within its small compass it conveys much about the character of Vermeer’s Delft—its quiet streets, its picturesque buildings, and the sense of community shared by its citizens.”¹⁰⁰

In this painting Vermeer has depicted the town of Delft, but it is a homely scene. We see no lofty church spires or palatial homes; rather we see a modest street with its spotless middle class homes. Nevertheless Vermeer’s painting tells us much about the charming roofs and sturdy architecture of 17th century Holland.

At first one might not notice the figures in the scene. In a hallway a servant woman attends to the laundry. Two children play by a bench outside the door of the house. And in that doorway sits the mistress of the home, enjoying a bit of sun perhaps, but concentrating on her sewing, and no doubt keeping a watchful eye on the children outside.

“Not only were industriousness with needlework and diligence with house cleaning highly esteemed values for women in Dutch society, so also was the proper care of children.”¹⁰¹

D. Judith Leyster

The Rejected Proposition. 1631, Mauritshuis, The Hague, the Netherlands.

No background distractions interrupt this quiet domestic scene. A woman diligently works on her embroidery, while being accosted by a rather sly looking man. In his hand he holds some coins; the implication (especially from the painting’s title) is that he is offering her money for sexual services. She ignores him completely. The small lamp throws light on her innocent and serious face.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

¹⁰⁰ *Johannes Vermeer.* Wheelock, Arthur K. Jr., et al. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, p. 102.

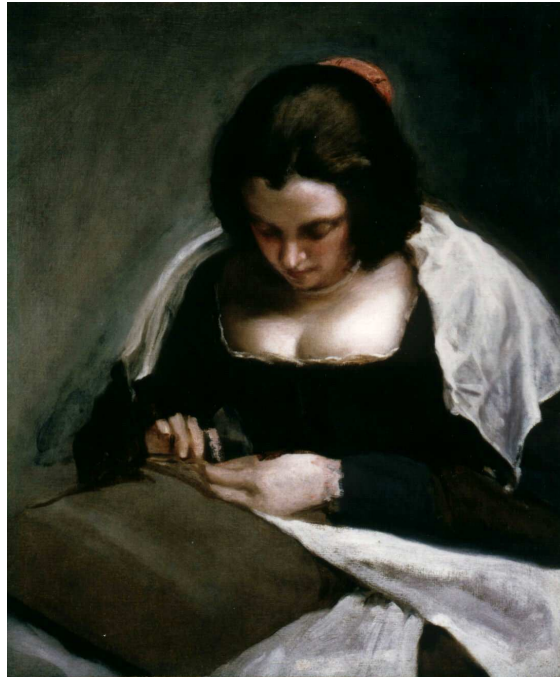
¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

E. Diego Velázquez

Spain's major gift to world art was Diego Velázquez (1599-1660). Extraordinarily precocious, while still in his teens he painted pictures demonstrating total technical mastery.¹⁰² Velasquez became court painter to Philip IV and is credited by some for producing the greatest work of art by any human being: *Las Meninas*. Although classified as a Baroque painter Velasquez never cluttered his paintings with symbols and allusions; he was straightforward in his approach.

The Needlewoman. 1640-50, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

This is a lesser-known work of Velázquez, very simple in its subject matter, but superbly executed. A young, dark haired woman sits with head lowered to her sewing. She is garbed in a black gown, simple but low cut with the neckline edged in a narrow lace. Her bosom swells above the neckline and light glances across her breasts; emphasis seems to be there rather than on her face or hands. She sews upon a white cloth, her hands delicately posed in the act of taking a stitch. Another white cloth is draped across her shoulders; it is uncertain whether this is just another piece of textile to be decorated or if this is part of her costume. Her hair is arranged in a surprisingly modern style but on the back of her head is what appears to be a snood. However, since her hair seems to not be caught up in any way perhaps this is some other kind of decoration.



Diego Velasquez, *The Needlewoman*, c. 1640-50. Oil on canvas 740 cm x 600 cm National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Andrew W. Mellon collection 1937.1.81.

¹⁰² Strickland, *op cit.*, p. 60.

F. Francisco Zurburán

Zurburán was a contemporary of Velásquez and worked in Seville; he is best known for his still lifes. However, another of his interests and no doubt works for which he could receive a commission were those depicting religious events.

The Young Virgin. 1632-33, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The young Mary is shown sitting cross-legged with her needlework pillow in her lap. The sewing is laid upon it; however, Mary looks heavenward, lost in thought. She wears a dark red skirt and blue vest. A white blouse with lace at collar and cuffs completes the outfit. White draperies frame the Virgin and the scene. Other objects are strewn about; we can see Mary's sewing basket and some of her tools, a cup, a stand with a small book, and especially a pot of lilies, which symbolize Joseph, her betrothed. Her face is so sad; we can only think she has a premonition of the fate she pursues.

The Girlhood of the Virgin. C. 1660, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

"He (Zurburán) shows Mary as a little girl, interrupting her sewing to pray, possibly following a mystical account where she pricks her finger, that initial bloodshed a prefiguring of a life of sacrifice."¹⁰³

This model has the same look about her as in *The Young Virgin* discussed above—from the dates of the two paintings perhaps it is her daughter. Mary seems so solemn, so melancholy, so ethereal. She has put down her sewing and placed the needle in the cushion; her hands are folded in prayer, her eyes gaze heavenward. She wears not the blue usually associated with the Virgin, but a light red edged with embroidery. Perhaps this is a symbol of the blood which will be shed.



Francisco Zurburan, *The Girlhood of the Virgin*. Oil on canvas, 117 x 94 cm, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

¹⁰³ *Paintings in the Hermitage*. Eisler, Colin. New York: Steward, Tabor, and Chang, 1990, p. 160.

G. Guido Reni

Guido Reni was a painter of the Italian Baroque period; he was born and worked in Bologna.

This was Guido Reni (1575-1642), a man of reclusive temperament, whom the German poet Goethe considered a 'divine genius'. Reni has had the misfortune to lose his fame over the years, as our civilization has become increasingly secular-minded and his works seem too emphatic in their piety.¹⁰⁴

The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary. 1610's, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

Mary is shown among the other young girls of her village. All are busy with their needlework, but engaged in conversation as they stitch. Mary appears to be commenting on something and several of her companions stop their work to listen to what she says. A small dog also listens carefully.

Mary is shown among the temple's virgins by Guido Reni in matter-of-fact fashion, his Baroque canvas's handsome complacency far from Spain's tragic mysticism. These plump, modish girls resemble local debutantes sewing for San Petronio's altar guild.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Beckett, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

¹⁰⁵ Eisler, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

Chapter 11

Allusions to Stitching

Renoir, Pierre Auguste. **Two Sisters on the Terrace.** 1881, Art Institute of Chicago.

In this tour de force painting Renoir has depicted two young women—one is really just a small girl—on the terrace of the Hotel Fournaise, where he painted many of his other works of this era. The older girl wears a commanding red hat, and her sober navy blue dress is brightened with a colorful corsage. The child's bright blue hat is bedecked with flowers and her white pinafore immensely brightens the whole composition.

The older sister holds a basket of colorful yarn, and perhaps the child has come dashing into the scene to obtain a ball of yarn for a game or something. It seems unlikely that the older sister is about to begin knitting, given that we know this area was a boating center, and there are boats in the background. However, art critics speculate that these balls of yarn refer to comments made by reviewers that Renoir's work looked like "knitting"; perhaps he was tweaking the cognoscenti who criticized him.



Pierre August Renoir, *Two Sisters (On the Terrace)*. Oil on canvas 100.5 x 81 cm, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Larned Coburn Memorial Collection, The Art Institute of Chicago, All Rights Reserved. 1933.455.

An additional appealing aspect is the wrought iron railing behind the sisters, and the woodland setting behind that, with a lake complete with boats, and houses on the horizon.

This is altogether a most popular painting, and one seen reproduced widely.

Manet, Edouard. **Portrait de M. and Mme August Manet.** 1860, Musée D'Orsay, Paris. This is a painting of Manet's parents when they were in their middle age. The father looks strained and aging; he was to die only two years after this painting was made. The mother looks more active as she fingers her basket of yarn—it certainly adds the only note of cheer to an otherwise dreary and austere composition.

“The painting evokes the severe and strict way of life of an upper middle class couple at the time of the Second Empire, and makes this a striking reflection of the society at that period ...”¹⁰⁶

One must wonder whether stitching was sometimes one of the few bright moments in the existence of these women, with their lives so constrained by social mores. The creative process and the interaction with other women must have been a source of enjoyment and gratification in what was sometimes a pretty austere life, even for the well-to-do.

Millet, Jean François. **Le Bouquet de Marguerites**. 1871-74, Musée d’Orsay, Paris. This is a different kind of painting for Millet, who is mostly remembered for his paintings of peasants in the field. Here the most prominent feature is a large bouquet of daisies in a blue vase on a stone windowsill. A woman peaks out the window, but one must look twice to even notice her, her portrayal is that subtle. In front of her rest some sewing articles—the ubiquitous tomato shaped pincushion, scissors, and some thread. The daisies no doubt refer to the idea of a lover who is on his way (he loves me; he loves me not). The sewing probably indicates that the young woman is accomplished in the womanly arts so highly valued in the 19th century.

Bazille, Frédéric. **Family Reunion**. 1867, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

Bazille’s large family portrait is one of the most ambitious of the multi-figure compositions attempted by the young *plein air* painters in the late 1860’s. Unlike the more casual picnic and leisure scenes of his colleagues, it shows virtually every figure posing with an awareness of being looked at and giving back an equally determined scrutinizing stare.¹⁰⁷

The sewing on the table, and the foreground still life of hat, parasol, and flowers, suggest an interruption of occupation for at least some of the sitters.¹⁰⁸

Everything about this painting suggests a prosperous well-to-do family, from the setting to the elegant clothing of the party. The sewing and flowers, etc., in the foreground suggest that these people were uncomfortable being idle, and at least some were looking for activity to relieve the idleness while they posed.

Degas, Edgar. **Interior**, also called **The Rape**. 1868-69, Philadelphia Museum of Art. This is a most mysterious of paintings. There is no evidence that Degas ever referred to it as *The Rape*; nevertheless the title survives for these many years. The scene is a room, illuminated by only a single light on a table in the center. To its left a woman in a white gown (a nightgown?) is crouched down and appears to be sobbing. Her hand is raised to her face and

¹⁰⁶ *Musée d’Orsay Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Masterpieces*, Lacambre, Genevieve, et al. London: Thames and Hudson, 1986, p. 18.

¹⁰⁷ McQuillan, p. 34.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

she is bent over in a grieving position. On the right of the lamp we see a bed chastely covered with a white spread. Only then might one notice a man leaning against a door at the foot of the bed; he is half lost in the shadows. His overcoat is tossed on the footboard of the bed. On the table next to the lamp is a sewing box, open, its pink interior the most prominent thing in the painting. A chain, a thimble, and scissors lie on the table. A corset has been tossed on the floor.

“...There had not...been a more expressive symbol of lost virginity than that gaping box, with its pink lining glaringly exposed in the lamplight.”¹⁰⁹

The allusion to needlework is very metaphorical in this painting, perhaps the idea of attaching two separate things together, perhaps the cutting notion.

Edelfelt, Albert Kuningatar. **Blanka** (Queen Blanche). 1877, Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki. In this lovely painting we see the lovely young queen of Finland holding her toddler son, the Crown Prince. Queen Blanche wears a long white gown with dark red velvet sleeves. Her hair is arranged simply. The little son is dressed in grey tights and a gold colored shirt; a narrow band is around his head. On the floor is a bear skin rug, complete with the head of the bear. The background is a richly carved interior, cabinets, tapestries, etc.

At the queen's side on the floor sits a sewing box full of colorful yarns. The actual sewing sits on a rug-draped table behind her.

The painter must have wished to portray the queen as pure and chaste—the ideal mother for the heir apparent. And the sewing would refer to her attention to duty, and to her accomplishments as the ideal of 19th century womanhood.

Waterhouse, J. W. **Lady of Shalott**. 1888, Tate Gallery, London.

This is a third painting by Waterhouse of the same literary subject, The Lady of Shalott. Here she is shown drifting down the river in her boat. Her red hair streams about her. The tapestry on which she worked is draped over the side of the boat.

Waterhouse still carefully selects the moment within the incident to hold us in contemplation—the moment between the words: ‘She loos’d the chain and down she lay.’ One feels the cool of the day as the doomed girl commences her last journey, but the centre scene is held by the haunting beauty of the figure...¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ *Degas*. Boggs, Jean Sutherland. New York: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988, p. 146.

¹¹⁰ Hobson, p. 42.

Chapter 12

Social Implications of the Portrayal of the Needlewoman

There are literally hundreds, perhaps thousands, of paintings which depict women, and sometimes a few men, engaged in some form of the needle arts. Some are doing plain sewing, some are knitting, some are crocheting, some are weaving, some are embroidering, some are making lace, a few are even mending nets. Why has this subject matter been so popular to the painter? I will posit several theories based on my research and my instincts as one who has devoted a great part of my leisure time to the art of embroidery. (The truth is that I have devoted so much time and effort that embroidery is no longer a leisure time activity but a professional endeavor and an all-consuming passion.)

Why They Stitched

It is my conclusion from my research that people engage in the needle arts for four major reasons. The first, and probably the most common—at least until mid-19th century—was absolute necessity. Garments had to be made and household linens were primarily produced at home. This was true of the vast majority of the people—perhaps not for the wealthy—but certainly for the peasants and the working class townspeople.

Until the advent of the sewing machine in the mid-nineteenth century, all women and some men—with the exception of the very prosperous—were required to sew in order to produce clothing and other household textiles. Sewing and its analogues were necessary for existence.

Needlework was also a highly portable activity; one could take it along on visits and trips; it could be done while watching children. It was the perfect activity for the evening when one was exhausted from the physical exertions of the day, and yet still needed to be productive. It was a device to feel virtuous when chatting with a neighbor in a time when idleness was highly proscribed.

The second reason people stitched was for enjoyment and artistic expression. Needlework, because of its repetitive nature, tends to be a soothing activity, and the stitcher is also rewarded with the results of her efforts. Needlework is a less demanding activity physically—with the exception of the demands made on the eyes — and so can be engaged in by the elderly, the infirm, and the tired. Needlework also offers the opportunity for artistic self-expression; it is perhaps the only graphic art that was readily available to almost any woman, historically speaking. The required materials (fabric and thread) and tools (needle) were usually readily available to most households, in a time when something like paint could be obtained only with much effort.

The third motivation for needlework was social expectation. Social expectation came in two expressions, not necessarily mutually exclusive. First, the well-to-do woman, whether single or married, could spend her leisure time at needlework, and she actually had discretionary time available. Needlework gave her a outlet for creative expression, but also demonstrated that her husband (or father) had the wherewithal to support a woman who was not also actively

contributing to the financial income of the family. It reflected well on the man to have a wife who had time for needlework.

The other social motivation was the marriage market. Young women, especially of the middle and upper classes, were expected to be schooled, but the emphasis was on needlework and a little bit of reading. So the daughter who was accomplished at needlework was considered to be desirable marriage material. School samplers hung on the walls of many American homes, and when the father could afford it, he had his daughters painted sewing.

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a well-to-do woman engaging in some form of the needlearts indicated that, although she did not have to do menial labor, she was nevertheless an industrious and diligent person, and therefore virtuous. The nineteenth century woman on both sides of the Atlantic was expected to demonstrate these traits, while also being submissive and compliant—and not overly learned.

Why Stitchers Were Painted

The artwork of the last 500 years certainly shows that our forebears were a diligent group, if one can judge by the vast number of paintings that show people stitching. If we leave out the religious paintings, the history paintings, and the mythological paintings which consumed the vast body of the early painting, we find a huge collection of paintings which depict the needlewoman. Only the reader would challenge the stitcher for preeminence.

However, early commissioned portraiture rarely depicted a person sewing. Royalty, nobility, and the wealthy merchant class would not have wished to be portrayed as engaged in what was considered to be a menial, or at very best an artisan task. Even if the women of the upper classes spent time at needlework—and we certainly know that they did, as evidenced by the vast bodies of work produced by Mary Queen of Scots and Bess of Hardwick, Catherine of Aragon and other such luminaries— still these women were not painted with their work in their hands.

About the only early paintings that did depict a needlewoman were the Dutch genre paintings of the seventeenth century. These were produced to appeal to a wealthy merchant class and usually were not commissioned. Most of them contained messages about virtuous behavior, idealized family life, or moral and dutiful life style.

Women's domestic abilities were considered extremely important by the middle class, so many moralizing genre scenes depict women absorbed in household tasks. These women are shown devoted to duty and caring for their work, the implication being that those looking at the painting should do the same.¹¹¹

The Dutch at this period were also a less class-conscious society and were more tolerant of non-conformist behavior—it is no accident that the Pilgrims who founded America first stopped off in Holland. This was also a society reacting against the excesses of Catholicism,

¹¹¹ Sturgis and Clayson, p. 199.

and the market for religious paintings had disappeared. Nevertheless it was a prosperous society, so genre painting flourished there, and images of the stitcher.

Similarly, genre painting in eighteenth century France and nineteenth-century England was produced for predominantly middle-class buyers. Most of these new patrons did not know Greek or Latin, and such paintings reflect the world of proverbs and idiomatic speech, of popular theatre and daily tasks.¹¹²

However,

by the eighteenth century embroidery was beginning to signify a leisured, aristocratic style—not working was becoming the hallmark of femininity. Embroidery with its royal and noble associations was perfect proof of gentility, providing concrete evidence that a man was able to support a leisured woman. Moreover, because embroidery was supposed to signify femininity—docility, obedience, love of home, and a life without work—it showed the embroiderer to be a deserving, worthy wife and mother.¹¹³

The eighteenth century also saw the rise of the value of the common man. In France revolutionary thinking was put forth by the philosophers concerning the dignity of the common man. In America the leaders declared that “all men are created equal” and the French were inspired by this to stage their own revolution, overthrowing the powerful in favor of rule by the middle class. Art followed suit.

No longer were the dominant forces in society—at least in Western Europe and the United States—the nobility and the clergy, and we see a shift in painting from religious and classical themes to emphasis on the everyday activities of the middle class.

In America we see two renowned painters, Gilbert Stuart and John Singleton Copley, both endowing their fellow countrymen with dignity. Copley particularly is noted for painting the wealthy merchant Paul Revere, dressed in his shirtsleeves and leather jerkin, with the tools of his trade in plain sight, and holding a silver vessel he had fashioned with this own hands. This was revolutionary in portraiture. Stuart, most famous for painting innumerable portraits of George Washington, looking noble indeed, also showed one of his clients, Mrs. Yates, with needlework in hand. In France Millet began to paint peasants to display to the world what difficult lives they led, and to cloak them in dignity and to evoke sympathy from the viewer.

By the mid-nineteenth century in France the Impressionists were making their presence known. Renoir depended to a great extent on wealthy clients who desired to have their portraits painted (who else could have afforded him?). Other Impressionists relied on well-to-do patrons for their livelihood. However, often they chose as their subjects ordinary people engaged in everyday, mundane activities. Women participating in domestic activities were popular; there are innumerable paintings of women reading, having tea, caring for children, arranging

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 198.

¹¹³ Parker, p. 11.

flowers, attending the theatre—all pleasurable activities in themselves and the observation of which was also intended to bring enjoyment to the viewer.

Interior scenes with women sewing had been featured in genre painting since the seventeenth century, and the theme was taken up in numerous Impressionist paintings. ...Adapting the traditional image of female industry and domesticity to *plein air* painting...he here sanctifies her as a housewife.¹¹⁴

If the evidence of paintings alone were considered it might be supposed that the wives and female models of the Impressionists did little other than sew or read. While reading might be seen as a sign of ample leisure time, sewing indicates domestic industry and accomplishments.¹¹⁵

In the nineteenth century there are numerous paintings which feature two young women—one reading, one sewing. These were often commissioned by wealthy fathers who desired to show off their daughters' accomplishments—and to show what good marriage material they were. In middle class families of the day it was expected that the daughters would acquire the womanly arts—homemaking was of primary importance. To manage a household—often consisting of numerous servants in addition to family (husband, many children and often extended families such as aging parents and spinster aunts)—the potential wife should be knowledgeable in reading, basic mathematics, plus sewing, and music, menu design, and interior decoration. These paintings not so subtly alluded to the fact that the daughters were accomplished young women; the reading and embroidery indicated formal education.

In fact, in the nineteenth century, particularly in England, embroidery became associated with the desirable traits in a young woman: purity and submissiveness. Rossetti, in his painting *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* chose to show Mary learning to embroider (a lily yet) rather than the traditional treatment which showed her learning to read.¹¹⁶

Today's art lover must be aware of the "baggage" one brings to the viewing of the many paintings which depict the needlewoman. If we as the viewer dislike sewing and other related needlearts ourselves then we are likely to see the model as oppressed and downtrodden. We may entertain two notions (or perhaps even both). One is that the necessity for sewn garments kept the nineteenth century woman and her predecessor chained, as it were, to her needle, not daring to permit an idle moment to slip by when she was not engaged in some productive work. One might be tempted to think that the models—who were often hired by the painters, as opposed to being family members—were desperate to use the time "sitting" to a double advantage., i.e. to get some of her sewing out of the way while earning money posing.

The second impression may be that the nineteenth century woman was required by convention to portray herself as accomplished in the needlearts (therefore good marriage material) or as the submissive, composed (read oppressed) young female that society told her she should be. Societal expectations are always there: in the 19th century the woman was expected to be an

¹¹⁴ McQuillan, p. 102.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹¹⁶ Parker, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

accomplished embroiderer, pure and untouched by any man; today's young woman is expected to be physically fit from hours in the gym, eager for extreme sports, and all the while earning an impressive salary. But not too assertive!

Feminists who have scorned embroidery tend to blame it for whatever constraint on women's lives they are committed to combat. Thus, for example, eighteenth century critical commentators held embroidery responsible for the ill health which was claimed as evidence of women's natural weakness and inferiority. In the nineteenth century women wanting to be taken seriously in supposedly 'male' spheres deliberately declared their rejection of embroidery to distance themselves from the feminine ideal.¹¹⁷

"Eyes lowered, head bent, shoulders hunched—the position signifies repression and subjugation, yet the embroiderer's silence, her concentration also suggests a self-containment, a kind of autonomy." The silent embroiderer has, however, become a part of a stereotype of femininity in which the self-containment of the woman sewing is interpreted as seductiveness.¹¹⁸

"While recognising the varied ways in which women have conformed to and resisted the dictates of femininity in their work it is important to remember that embroidery has been and is a source of artistic pleasure of many women."¹¹⁹

The alternative mindset that the viewer may bring to the painting is one of the happy needlewoman. Since in the 21st century no one sews out of necessity, it may be assumed that anyone embroidering is doing so because she chooses it. Indeed there are organizations all over the English-speaking world (and no doubt elsewhere) that are devoted to the pursuit of needlework for the pure enjoyment of it. So an ardent embroiderer will regard the painting of the needlewoman with a different attitude. She will see the model as relaxed, enjoying herself, accomplishing something while her presence is required elsewhere. All the unpleasant associations with subjugation and oppression will not occur, since the viewer would willingly choose to occupy her own time in similar fashion.

Indeed today the embroiderer may be regarded as a trifle old-fashioned (why do all those little bitty stitches when a machine could do it in 1/10 the time). Or perhaps even as self-indulgent. Or neglectful of her duties. Or bored with her present company. The truth remains that for a certain segment of society embroidery is inherently a pleasurable, creative activity, every bit as much as painting or woodworking might be for others for whom the imperative to work with one's hands is overwhelming. Some people cannot *not* stitch.

After hunting down several hundred of these paintings discussed in this dissertation I have come to conclusions of my own. I believe all of these reasons mentioned above were motivations for the artist to depict his subject with her stitching in hand, whether it be societal expectation or political statement. However, in many cases I believe the subject herself insisted that she be allowed to stitch while posing for the painting. This seems particularly evident in

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

both paintings of Camille Monet; it is said that Monet himself regarded his wife's embroidery as analogous to his painting, that he took pleasure in the fact that she was exercising her creativity while he exercised his. I must also speculate that Camille was not pleased to sit by idly while her husband painted.

In Mary Cassatt's work we may conjecture a similar hypothesis. There are numerous paintings of her sister Lydia engaged in some sort of needlework. In fact we see her doing so many different types of needlework that we can only surmise that she was most accomplished in them all. It seems likely that Mary took advantage of her sister's occupation with her stitching to use her as subject; both women benefited from this mutually advantageous arrangement. There is also evidence that the senior Cassatts valued both their daughters' endeavors: Mary was the one who painted and Lydia was the one who stitched.

Renoir's wife Aline is also depicted in several paintings with her sewing in her hand; she was a country woman who no doubt was bred to believe that idle hands are the devil's workshop.

And Edmund Tarbell, the American Impressionist, has painted his family, or portions thereof, on several occasions. In at least three of these paintings his sister sits in profile intently absorbed in her embroidery, obviously incapable of posing for her brother without her own hands similarly occupied.

Gilbert Stuart's painting of Mrs. Yates was unusual for its time. This is a very early portrayal of the American version of a "woman of leisure" who had the time away from household duties to occupy herself with embroidery. We know she was a wealthy woman; yet she has a no-nonsense look about her. And she is certainly no sweet young thing on the marriage market. It is my conjecture that Mrs. Yates was one of those women who were incapable of sitting with hands folded demurely in her lap. And at her age and station in life, why should she? She could do whatever she pleased, and it pleased her to be portrayed for all eternity with needle in hand.

It is my conclusion then, that in addition to the iconography of the needlewoman as submissive and contained, accomplished and industrious, diligent and self-possessed, this is also a portrayal of a woman enjoying herself. If today people embroider for the pure joy of it, for the artistic expression of themselves, does it not stand to reason that our ancestors were doing likewise?

I have held for many years that sewing and embroidery are a link between the modern woman and her predecessors, back through the mists of time. In all cultures in all parts of the world, from the most primitive cultures to the most advanced societies women for pleasure have taken needle in hand to create garments and then to embellish them with threads and beads. From there they have proceeded to create artworks with the needle, using the implements with which they were comfortable and adept. Long before paint was perfected, good threads and good needles were available to produce works of art. And the needle and thread were portable and safe for use around children, as always the primary obligation of most women throughout time.

Embroidery is something we share with our sisters throughout the world in all societies. It is a link to the women of the past, and something to hand down to our progeny. The women of the world, past, present and future, are held together by the delicate threads that they employ in their artistic endeavor.

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Chapter 4

Claude Monet. **Camille Monet and a Child in the Artist's Garden in Argenteuil**, 1875; French (1840-1926) Oil on Canvas 55.3 x 64.7 cm Anonymous gift in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin S. Webster 1976.833. Fine Arts Museum of Boston.

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Pierre-August Renoir. French 1841-1919 **By the Seashore**. Oil on Canvas 92.1 x 72.4 cm 1883. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer 1929 (29.100.125.) All Rights Reserved.

Pierre Auguste Renoir, French 1841-1919. **Jean Renoir Sewing**, c. 1899, oil on canvas, 55.9 x 46.6 cm. Mr and Mrs. Martin A Ryerson Collection, 1937.1027 ©The Art Institute of Chicago, all rights reserved.

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Chapter 6

Anna Ancher. (1859—1935) **Solskin i den blå stue**. (Sunlight in the Blue Room) 1891 Olie på lærred. 65.2 x 58.8 cm # 222 Skagens Museum Denmark.

Chapter 7

Joseph Raphael, American 1872-1950 **Child Sewing**. oil on canvas, 1916. 24-3/4 in x 29-7/8 in. Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, Gift of Albert M. Bender, 1926.2.

Diego Rivera, Mexican, 1886-1957. **The Weaver**, 1936. Tempera and oil on canvas, 66 x 106.7 cm. Gift of Josephine Wallace KixMiller in memory of her mother, Julie F. Miller who purchased the painting from the artist at his studio in Mexico in 1936. 1998.529 ©The Art Institute of Chicago, All Rights Reserved.

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Madame de Pastoret and Her Son, 1791- mid. 1792 , oil on canvas, 129.8 x 96.6 cm. Clyde M Carr Rund and Major Acquisitions Endowment, 1967.228 ©the Art Institute of Chicago, All Rights Reserved.

François-Hubert Drouais , French, 1727-1775. **Madame de Pompadour** 1762-63 oil on canvas
217 x 156.8 cm. National Gallery London.

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Sir Joshua Reynolds. **The Ladies Waldegrave** 1723-1792, English. the Ladies Waldegrave, c. 1750. National Gallery of Scotland. oil on canvas 1243.5 x 168 cm. NG 2171.

Gilbert Stuart. **Catherine Brass Yates , (Mrs Richard Yates)**, 1793-94, oil on canvas 30 x 25 in, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, 1940.1.4.

Chapter 9

John Singleton Copley., American 1737-1815. **Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Mifflin**, oil on canvas Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Johannes Vermeer. Dutch, 1632-1675. **La Dentellière**. c. 1665 Toile sur bois .24 x .21 m Acquis 1870 The Louvre.

Diego Velasquez **The Needlewoman**, c 1640-50. oil on canvas. 740 cm x 600 cm National Gallery of Art, Washington DC 1937.1.81 Andrew W. Mellon collection.

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Pierre Auguste Renoir . French, 1841-1919. **Two Sisters (On the Terrace)** oil on canvas, 100.5 x 81 cm. Mr and Mrs Lewis Larned Coburn Memorial Collection, 1933.455. The Art Institute of Chicago, All Rights Reserved.

Curly Locks

By James Whitcomb Riley
19th century

Curly Locks! Curly Locks! Wilt thou be mine?
Thou shalt not wash the dishes, nor yet feed the swine,
But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam,
And feast upon strawberries, sugar and cream.

Curly Locks! Curly Locks! Wilt thou be mine?
The throb of my heart is in every line,
And the pulse of a passion as airy and glad
In its musical beat as the little Prince had!

Thou shalt not wash the dishes, nor yet feed the swine—
O I'll dapple thy hands with these kisses of mine
Till the pink of the nail of each finger shall be
As a little pet blush in full blossom for me.

But sit on a cushion an sew a fine searm
And thou shalt have fabric as fair as a dream, —
The red of my veins and the white of my love
And the gold of my joy for the braiding thereof.

And feast upon strawberries, sugar and cream
From a service of silver, with jewels a gleam, —
At they feet will I bide, at they beck will I rise,
And twinkle my soul in the night of thine eyes!

The Lady of Shallot
Alfred Lord Tennyson (1843)

I

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shallot.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shallot

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shallot?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "Tis the fairy
Lady of Shallot."

II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay

To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shallot.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That stands before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shallot.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shallot.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights,
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
"I am half sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shallot.

III

A bow shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shallot.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the Golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot:
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra," by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his bank complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott

And down the river's dim expanse -
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance -
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right -
The leaves upon her falling light -
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott."

"Mariana in the Moated Grange"

(Shakespeare, Measure for Measure)

By Alfred Lord Tennyson

1 With blackest moss the flower-plots
2 Were thickly crusted, one and all:
3 The rusted nails fell from the knots
4 That held the pear to the gable-wall.
5 The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
6 Unlifted was the clinking latch;
7 Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
8 Upon the lonely moated grange.
9 She only said, "My life is dreary,
10 He cometh not," she said;
11 She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
12 I would that I were dead!"

13 Her tears fell with the dews at even;
14 Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
15 She could not look on the sweet heaven,
16 Either at morn or eventide.
17 After the flitting of the bats,
18 When thickest dark did trance the sky,
19 She drew her casement-curtain by,
20 And glanced athwart the glooming flats.
21 She only said, "The night is dreary,
22 He cometh not," she said;
23 She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
24 I would that I were dead!"

25 Upon the middle of the night,
26 Waking she heard the night-fowl crow:
27 The cock sung out an hour ere light:
28 From the dark fen the oxen's low
29 Came to her: without hope of change,
30 In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn,
31 Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn
32 About the lonely moated grange.
33 She only said, "The day is dreary,
34 He cometh not," she said;
35 She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
36 I would that I were dead!"

37 About a stone-cast from the wall
38 A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,
39 And o'er it many, round and small,
40 The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.
41 Hard by a poplar shook alway,
42 All silver-green with gnarled bark:

43 For leagues no other tree did mark
44 The level waste, the rounding gray.
45 She only said, "My life is dreary,
46 He cometh not," she said;
47 She said "I am aweary, aweary
48 I would that I were dead!"

49 And ever when the moon was low,
50 And the shrill winds were up and away,
51 In the white curtain, to and fro,
52 She saw the gusty shadow sway.
53 But when the moon was very low
54 And wild winds bound within their cell,
55 The shadow of the poplar fell
56 Upon her bed, across her brow.
57 She only said, "The night is dreary,
58 He cometh not," she said;
59 She said "I am aweary, aweary,
60 I would that I were dead!"

61 All day within the dreamy house,
62 The doors upon their hinges creak'd;
63 The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
64 Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,
65 Or from the crevice peer'd about.
66 Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors
67 Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
68 Old voices called her from without.
69 She only said, "My life is dreary,
70 He cometh not," she said;
71 She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
72 I would that I were dead!"

73 The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,
74 The slow clock ticking, and the sound
75 Which to the wooing wind aloof
76 The poplar made, did all confound
77 Her sense; but most she loathed the hour
78 When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
79 Athwart the chambers, and the day
80 Was sloping toward his western bower.
81 Then said she, "I am very dreary,
82 He will not come," she said;
83 She wept, "I am aweary, aweary,
84 Oh God, that I were dead!"

The Ideal Wife

10. When one finds a worthy wife her value is far beyond pearls.
11. Her husband, entrusting his heart to her has an unfailing prize.
12. She brings him good, and not evil, all the days of her life.
13. She obtains wool and flax and makes cloth with skillful hands.
14. Like merchant ships, she secures her provisions from afar.
15. She rises while it is still night, and distributes food to her household.
16. She picks out a field to purchase; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.
17. She is girt about with strength, and sturdy are her arms.
18. She enjoys the success of her dealings; at night her lamp is undimmed. She puts her hands to the distaff, and her fingers ply the spindle.
20. She reaches out her hands to the poor, and extends her arms to the needy.
21. She fears not the snow for her household; all her charges are doubly clothed.
22. She makes her own coverlets; fine linen and purple are her clothing.
23. Her husband is prominent at the city gates as he sits with the elders of the land.
24. She makes garments and sells them, and stocks the merchants with belts.
25. She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs at the days to come.
26. She opens her mouth in wisdom, and on her tongue is kindly counsel.
27. She watches the conduct of her household, and eats not her food in idleness.
28. Her children rise up and praise her; her husband, too, extols her:
- 29 'Many are the women of proven worth, but you have excelled them all.'
- 30 Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the woman who fears the Lord is to be praised
31. Give her a reward of her labors, and let her works praise her at the city gates.

New Catholic Edition of the *Holy Bible* Confraternity—Douay Version
NY: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1957

The Prayse of the Needle

To all dispersed sorts of Arts and Trades
I write the Needles prayse (that never fades)
So long as children shall begot,
So long as garments shall be made and worne.
So long as Hemp or Flax or Sheep shall bear
Their linnen Wollen fleeces yeare by yeare;
So long as silkworms, with exhausted spoile,
Of their entrailles for man's gaine shall toyle;
Yea, till the world be quite dissolved and past,
So long as least, the Needles use shall last.

John Taylor 1580 -1654

The Needle's Excellency

Collected with much praise and industrie
From scorching Spaine and freezing Muscovie,
From fertile France and pleasant Italie,
From Polande, Sweden, Denmarke, Germanie
And some of these rare patternes have been set,
Beyond the bounds of faithlesse Mahomet,
From spacious China and those Kingdomes East
And from great Mexico, the Indies West.
Thus are these workes farre fetch'd and dearly bought
And consequently good for ladyes thought

by John Taylor

Museums Visited in Pursuit of this Research

1. National Gallery of Scotland
2. National Gallery of England
3. British Museum
4. Tate Gallery, London
5. City Art Gallery, York, England
6. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX
7. Detroit Institute of Art
8. Museum of New Mexico, Fine Arts Museum, Santa Fe, NM
9. Shiawasse Council for the Arts, Owosso, MI
10. Art Gallery of Windsor Ontario
11. Grand Rapids Art Museum
12. Shanghai Museum: Minority costumes, lots of embroidery
13. Jingzhou Museum: some embroideries and weavings
14. Imperial Palace (Forbidden City): some embroideries, imperial robes, etc.
15. Suzhou Embroidery Institute
16. John Collins Suzhou Studio of Asian Embroidery
17. Flint Institute of Art, Flint, MI
18. Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston, SC
19. Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO
20. Royal Museum of British Columbia, Victoria, BC
21. Vancouver Museum of Art
22. National Gallery of Art , Washington, DC
23. National Museum of American History (the Smithsonian) – Washington, DC
24. Ateneumin Taidemuseo (Fine Arts Museum), Helsinki Finland
25. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia
26. National Museum of Art, Tallinn, Estonia
27. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark
28. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
29. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
30. Musée Malraux, Le Havre, France
31. The Art Institute of Chicago

Books Bought in Pursuit of this Research

100 Golden Memories Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
A Collection of Pan Honhai's oil Paintings (some embroiderers depicted)
A Passion for Renoir, Sterling and Francine Clark Collect by Kern, Esielonis, Ivinski, Molhot, and Burke
American Impressionism Treasures from the Smithsonian American Art Museum
American Impressionists Abroad and at Home
American Paintings from the Manoogian Collection
Anonymous was a Woman by Mirra Bank
Artemisia (biography of Artemisia Gentileschi) by Alexandra Lapierre
Baroque Painting (Barrons Art Handbooks)
Cezanne from A to Z by Marie Sellier
Chamber Works by Frederick Frieseke published by Hollis Taggart Galleries, NY
Impressionism by Jude Welton
Emily Carr, An Introduction to her Life and Art by Anne Newlands
Faces of Impressionism: Portraits from American Collections by Sona Johnston
Girl with a Pearl Earring (historical fiction about Johannes Vermeer) by Tracy Chevalier
How to Recognize Styles the Great Schools of Western Paintings
Impression by Richard Brettell
Impressionism beneath the Surface by Paul Smith
Impressionism by James H. Rubin
Impressionist Masterworks from the National Gallery of Canada
Impressionist Portraits by Melissa McQuillan
In Celebration of Women by Helen Exley
La Visite/Le Havre (Les chefs-d'oeuvre du Musée Malraux) by Françoise Cohen
Les Anciens Veillent by Dave Bouchard and Roy Henry Vickers
Les Femmes Impressionnistes by Marianne Delafond
Les Galeries Nationales d'Ecosse (Scotland) English version not available
Lust for Life (biography of Vincent Van Gogh) by Irving Stone
Monet, Renoir and the Impressionist Landscape by George Shackelford and Fronia Wissman
Mothers, Sisters, Daughters, Women, 4 books by Helen Exley
National Gallery (Canada) address book (has several stitchers in it)
On Reflection by Jonathan Miller
Paintings in the Hermitage by Colin Eisler
Van Gogh and Gauguin—The Studio of the South by Douglas Druick and Peter Kort Zergers, and The Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
People in Art the National Gallery (UK)
Pierre Auguste Renoir by Susan Rayfield
Renoir, my Father by Jean Renoir
Signac by Marina L. Ferretti-Bocquillon, Anne Distel, John Leighton, and Susan Alyson Stein. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Stories about the Hermitage
The Art of Portraits by Helen Dore
The Bible (nice applicable quote in Proverbs)
The Embroiderers' Story by Thomasina Beck

The Hermitage (the History of the Buildings and Collections)
The History of Art by Volker Gebhardt
The Portrait by Norbert Schneider
The Story of Art by E. H. Gombrich
The Subversive Stitch by Rozsika Parker
Two Golden Ages (Masterpieces of Dutch and Danish Painting) by Lene Bøgh Rønberg,
Kasper Monrad, and Ragni Linnet
Understanding Paintings edited by Alexander Sturgis and Hollis Clayson
Van Gogh au Musée Van Gogh by Ronald De Leeuw
Van Gogh by Dieter Beaujean
Van Gogh Face to Face, the Detroit Institute of Arts
William Merritt Chase Modern American Landscape by Barbara Dayer Gallati

Exhibits Attended

American Masters: The Manoogian Collection.

Part One: Landscape and Still Life Traditions—Grand Rapids Art Museum

Part Two: the Impressionists—Grand Rapids Art Museum

Chamber Works by Frederick Frieseke—Shiawassee Council for the Arts

Claude Monet—Art Institute of Chicago

Degas in America—New Orleans Museum of Art

Emily Carr: Artist Author Eccentric—Royal Museum of British Columbia, Victoria

Empire of the Sultan—Detroit Institute of Art

French Paintings of Three Centuries from the New Orleans Museum of Art—Edsel and Eleanor Ford Home, Grosse Pointe Michigan

Great French Paintings from the Barnes Foundation—Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Gustave Caillebotte, Urban Impressionist—Art Institute of Chicago

Impressionism, Sunlight and Shadow—Ella Sharp Museum in Jackson, MI

Impressionism: Selections from Five American Museums—Toledo Museum of Art

Impressionist Masterworks from the National Gallery of Canada—Art Gallery of Windsor

John Singer Sargent—Museum of Fine Arts Boston

Mary Cassatt, Modern Woman—Art Institute of Chicago

Monet, Renoir and the Impressionist Landscape—Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Monet: Late Paintings of Giverny from the Musée Marmottan—Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco

Renoir—Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The Faces of Impressionism—Museum of Fine Arts in Houston

Two Golden Ages. Masterpieces of Dutch and Danish Painting—Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Van Gogh and Gauguin—the Studio of the South—The Art Institute of Chicago

Van Gogh Face to Face—Detroit Institute of Art

William Merritt Chase—Modern American Landscapes – MFA, Houston

Women of the World: A Global Collection of Art—Flint Institute of Arts

Dissertation Glossary

Words I used in searching for artworks of women (or men) engaged in some sort of needlework or related endeavors:

ENGLISH

Crocheting
Embroidery
Knitting
Lace
Needle
Needlework
Sewing
Spinning
Stitch
Stitcher
Weaving
Window

FRENCH

Aiguille
Cousant
Couser
Dentelle
Dentelliere
Filet
Maille
Point
Ravaudeuse
Tisser
Tricoter

DUTCH

Kousenstoppen
Naaiende
Wever

ITALIAN

Ago
Cucire
Cucito
Lavano a maglia
Lavano all'uncinetto
Merletto
Punto
Ricamare
Ricamo

GERMAN

Hackelei
Hahende
Handarbeit
Handelrin
Nadel
Spitze
Stich
Sticken
Stickerei
Stricken

SPANISH

Aguja
Coser
Costura
Encaje
Ganchillo
Labor de sajuja
Puntada
Tejer
Tricotar

Database of Works Depicting Needleworkers

Artist	Work	Date	Museum
Ace, Katherine	Thursday Mending	1994	
Alexander, John White	A Toiler	c 1898	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Alma-Tadema, Lady Laura	Sweet Industry	1904	ENGLAND, Manchester City Art Gallery
American 19th Century	Probably Sarag Cook Arnold Knitting	c 1830	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Ancher, Anna	Keeping Grandma Amused	1912	DENMARK Ribe Art Museum DK
	Interior With Woman Sewing	1910	DENMARK Skagen
	A Blue Dress Being Sewn For A Fancy-Dress Party	1920	DENMARK Skagen
	Sunlight In A Blue Room; Helga Ancher Crocheting	1891	DENMARK Skagen
	Kraen Wolleson Mending Nets	1886	DENMARK Skagen
	Two Little Girls Being Taught To Sew	1910	DENMARK Skagen
Ancher, Helga	Mrs Brønnum At Her Sewing		DENMARK Skagen
Ancher, Michael	Young Woman Crocheting, Tine	1880	DENMARK Ordrupgaard Collection (Copenhagen)
Anonymous	Unknown		USA CO Collection of Phoebe Mitchell
	Three Uzbek Women Stitching	???	UZBEKISTAN, Tashkent a wall
	Cover Of Needlecraft Magazine	1926	
	Anne Trump Furnell & Her Daughter Lydia		Art of the Embroiderer
Anonymous -- British	Nobility Tapestries	c 1500	FRANCE Paris - Cluny Museum
	Interior, A Young Woman At Her Sewing		USA CA Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
Anonymous Dutch Master	The Lacemaker	17th c	RUSSIA St.Petersburg The Hermitage
Anonymous Italian Manuscript	Craftsmen At Work On An Embroidery	ca. 1400	
Argunov, Ivan,	Portrait Of Natalia Tolstaya Née Lopukhina	1768	
Augustin, Jean Baptiste (Style Of)	Portrait Of Woman And Tapestry Work	1800-10	
Backer, Harriet	Interior With Woman Sewing	1883	NORWAY, Oslo, Nasjonalgallerieet
	Sewing By Lamplight	c 1870	NORWAY, Oslo, Nasjonalgallerieet
	Blue Interior	1883	NORWAY, Oslo, Nasjonalgallerieet
Barrias	Jeune Fille De Megone		FRANCE: Réunion DES MUSÉES Nationaux
Bartlett, Paul Wayland	Woman Knitting	1885-95	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Bazille, Frederic	Family Reunion	1867	FRANCE D'Orsay
Bearden, Romare	The Return Of Ulysses	1976	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Bechi, Luigi	La Lezione De ???		
Beckwith, James Carroll	The Embroiderer		USA DC Guarisco
Bellows, George Wesley	Girl Sewing	1923	USA CA Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
Bendz, Wilhelm:	Portrait Of One Of The Artist's Sisters		DK Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst
	Portrait Of The Raffenberg Family	1830	DK Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst

Artist	Work	Date	Museum
Benson, Frank Weston.	The Sunny Window	1919	USA Private Collection
	The Open Window	1917	USA DC Corcoran
Bertoli, Sr. Mary	Lady Quilter	1996	USA MS Tutwiler note card
	Passin' It On	1996	USA MS private collection P.O. Box 562 -
Bierstadt, Alfred	Roman Fish Market, Arch Of Octavius	1858	USA CA Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
Bishop, Isabel	Mending	1945	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Blackstone, Harriet	Lacemakers, Bruges	1912	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Bocion, François	Fishermen Mending Their Fishing Nets	1877	SU: The Oskar Reinhart Foundation Winterthur
Backer, Harriet	The Young Seamstress	1898	ENGLAND London Felix Rosentheil's Widow & Son,
	Needle And Thread		
	Tricoteuse	1879	ENGLAND London: Felix Rosentheil's Widow & Son
	La Tricoteuse	1869	USA NE Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha
Boursse, Esaias	Interior With Woman Sewing (Dutch)	1660	Berlin
Breslau, Louise Catherine	Chez Soi		FRANCE; Réunion Des Musées Nationaux
Breton, Jules	A Peasant Girl Knitting,	1873	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art
Bridgman, Frederick Arthur	Moorish Interior	20th cent.	USA MI - Detroit Institute of Art
Brion, Leon	Marie-Jeanne		FRANCE Réunion Des Musées Nationaux
Brownscombe, Jennie Augusta	Love's Young Dream	1887	USA DC National Museum of Women in the Arts
Caillebotte, Gustav	Mlle Boissiere Knitting	1877	USA TX Houston
	Portrait Of Mme Martial Caillebotte	1877	private collection
	Portraits In The Country	1876	FRANCE: Musee Baron Gerard--Bayeux
	Portraits Dans Un Intérieur	1877	private collection
Caraglio, Giovanni Jacopi	The Annunciation, After The Lost Painting By Titian	16 century	USA CA Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
Carpenter, Miles B.	Indian Woman	c 1970	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Carpentier, Evariste	Tending Her Flock	c 1900???	USA DC Guarisco
Carr, Emily	Women Of Brittany	1911	CANADA BC Vancouver Art Gallery
	Salish Woman Weaving		CANADA BC British Columbia Archives
Cassatt, Mary	Lydia Seated On A Terrace Crocheting	1881-82	USA Private Collection
	Young Mother Sewing--Study For		
	Mary Ellison Embroidering	1877	USA PA Philadelphia Museum of art
	Jeune Fille Au Jardin	1886	FRANCE Réunion Des Musées Nationaux - Louvre
	Femme Cousante	c. 1880-82	FRANCE Musee d'Orsay
	Girl In Green	1908	USA MO St. Louis
	Young Woman Sewing	1890	USA IL Art Institute of Chicago
	Young Mother Sewing	1900	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art
	Mrs. Casatt Knitting		USA PA Philadelphia Museum of Art
	Lydia At Tapestry	1881	USA MI - Flint Institute of Art

Artist	Work	Date	Museum
	The Young Bride	1875	USA NJ Montclair Art Museum
	Lydia Crocheting In The Garden At Marly	1880	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of ART
Cezanne, Paul	Madame Cezanne Sewing		SWEDEN Stockholm, Nationalmuseum
	Girl At The Piano.	1867-68	RUSSIA St.Petersburg The Hermitage
Challie	Mme. Challie En Brodant	?????	?????
Chardin, Jean Baptiste	Mother And Child With Needlework	1861	FRANCE Paris Louvre
Chardin, Jean Simeon (Style Of)	Woman Knitting	18th c	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art
Chase, William Merrit	For The Little One	1895	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art NY
Chialiva, Luigi	Gardeuse D'oies		FRANCE Réunion Des MuSées Nationaux
Cobbett, Edward John	A Welsh Interior	1856	ENGLAND York City Art Gallery
Coonmans, Pierre Oliver Joseph	The Mask	1870	ENGLAND - York City Art Gallery
Copley, John Singleton	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Mifflin	1773	USA PA Philadelphia Museum of Art
	Mrs. Seymour Fort	1778	USA CT Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford
Corinth, Lovis	Frau Mit Handarbeit		USA DC National Gallery of Art
	The Artist's Father On His Sickbed	1888	GERMANY Frankfurt: Städelsches Kunstinstitut und
Couse, Eanger Irving	The War Bonnet	c. 1910	USA NM Museum of New Mexico
Cousturier, Lucie	Femme Faisant Du Crochet	1908	FRANCE Réunion DES MUSées Nationaux
Cox, Kenyon	Study For "Labor"	c 1870	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Dali, Salvatore	Femme A La Fenetre A Figueras		SPAIN collection particuliere, Barcelona
Danielson-Gambogi, Elin	Sisters	1891	DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
David, Jacques-Louis	Madame De Pastoret And Her Son	1791-92	USA IL Art Institute of Chicago
De Camp, Joseph	The Seamstress	1916	USA DC Corcoran
De Saga	No Title		USA MI private collection Mary Jane Kearns
Degas, Edgar	Interieur Aka Rape	1868-69	USA PA The Philadelphia Museum of Art
	Woman Embroidering	19 century	USA DC National Gallery of Art
Delachaux, Leon	La Lingère--Interieur		FRANCE: Réunion DES MUSées Nationaux
Denis, Maurice	La Leçon De Couture		FRANCE Réunion DES MUSées Nationaux
Desch, Frank	The Blue Negligee	c 1912	USA DC Guarisco - private collection
Dou, Gerard	Old Woman Unreeling Threads.	1661	RUSSIA St.PetersburgThe Hermitage
Drolling, Martin	Interieure D'une Cuisine		FRANCE Réunion DES MUSées Nationaux
Drouais, Francois-Hubert	Mme De Pompadour	17 century	ENGLAND, London - National Gallery
Duffy, Raoul	The Veranda At Villerville	c 1930	FRANCE Musee de Beaux Arts, Le Havre
Duparc, Francoise	Woman Knitting	18th	
Eakins, Susan	Two Sisters	1879`	USA Private Collection: Peggy MacDowell Thomas
Eakins, Thomas	The Courtship	1878	USA CA Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
Ebert, Charles	Mary Roberts Ebert With Betty	c 1906	private collection
Eckersberg, Christopher William	The Parcae: Clotho, Lachesis, And Atropis	1808	DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst

Artist	Work	Date	Museum
	The Eldest Daughters Of M.L. Nathanson, Bella And Hanna		DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
	The Nathanson Family	1818	DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
Edelfelt, Albert	Kuningatar Blanka (Queen Blanca)	1877	FINLAND Helsinki Ateneum
Ekman, Wilhelm	Kreeta Haapasalo Playing The Kantele In A Peasant Cottage	1868	FINLAND Helsinki Ateneum
Engert, Easmus Viennese	Viennese Domestic Garden	1828-30	GERMANY Berlin
Etty, William	The Crochet Worker		ENGLAND, York City Art Gallery
Exner, Julius	Visiting Grandfather.	1853	DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
Fantin-Latour, Henri	The Embroiderer	1881	FRANCE Paris Galerie Schmidt
	The Two Sisters	1859	USA MO St. Louis Art Museum
Favretto, Giacomo	Girl In The Window	c.1880	FRANCE CA Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
Fontanesi, Antonia.	Spring Sun	1875	
Fountainbleau School	Gabrielle D"Estrees And One Of Her Sisters	16th cent.	France Paris The Louvre
Frampton, Edward	St. Claire	c 1910	ENGLAND private collection
Francisco, J. Bond	The Sick Child	1893	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Frieseke, Frederick	Breakfast In The Garden	1911	USA IL Daniel J. Tera Collection
	The Garden Umbrella	by 1910	USA GA Telfair Museum of Art
	The Fountain	1923	private collection
	Normandy Girl	1922	private collection
	Child Sewing	1922-23	location unknown
	Peace	1917	USA DC the Corcoran Gallery of Art
	The Chinese Robe	1931	location unknown
	The Artist's Wife Sewing	1923	location unknown
	Torn Lingerie	1915	USA MO St. Louis Art Museum
	On The Balcony In Giverny	1912-1915	USA OH Akron Art Museum
Garber	Mending		USA MI Manoogian Collection
Gauguin, Paul	Study Of A Nude, Suzanne Sewing	1880	DENMARK Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen
	Portrait Of Mette Gauguin	1878	SWITZERLAND E.G. Buhrlé Collection - -Zurich
Godwin, Arthur Clifton	Louis Kronberg In His Studio In Copley Hall	c. 1913	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art
Gonzalez, Simón.	The Weaver	late 20th c.	note card
Groley			FRANCE Réunion Des Musées Nationaux
Guignet, Francois	Jeanne Fille Faisant Du Crochet		FRANCE Réunion Des Musées Nationaux
Hale, Ellen Day	June		USA DC National Museum of Women in the Arts
Hammershoi, Wilhelm	Interior With A Lady	1901	USA MI - Detroit Institute of Art
	The Artist's Mother And Wife	1891	
Hankey, William Lee	La Lecon De Tricot		FRANCE: Réunion des Musées Nationaux
Hansen, Constantin	Three Young Girls--The Artist's Sister (Alvida, Ida, Henrietta)	1821	DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
	A Housewife At Her Band Loom Talking To Two Children	1859	DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst

Artist	Work	Date	Museum
Harden, John	Needlework, Reading, & Writing	1829	ENGLAND ABBOTT HALL ART GALLERY
Hardy, Frederick Daniel	The Three Orphans	1860	ENGLAND, York City Art Gallery
Harris, Melissa.	Spinning Your Dreams.	late 20th c.	note card
Haslund Otto	The Kntting Lesson	1890	DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
Hassam, Childe	Geraniums	1888	USA NY Glens Fall - The Hyde Collection
	Maude Sewing	1883	USA MO St. Louis Art Museum
	Ten Pound Island	1896	USA AL Tuscaloosa AL David Warner Foundation
	The Terre Cuite Tea Set	1910	USA TN Chattanooga Hunter Museum of American
Hawthorne, Charles	The Trousseau		
Hellenistic Relief	Young Girl Sewing		ITALY Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples
Hendriks, Wybarand	Interieur Met Slapende Man En Kousenstoppend Vrouwtje	1830?	NETHERLANDS Frans Halsmuseum Haarlem
	Interior Met Naaiende Vrouw	1795	NETHERLANDS Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Herdman, Robert	Evening Thoughts	19 cent.	SCOTLAND National Gallery - Edinburgh
Hesler, Otto	Finishing The Tapestry	1888	USA DC Guarisco
Hicks, George Elgar	Queen Mathilda With Her Women And The Bayeux Tapestry	1899	ENGLAND Christie's
Hillestroem, Pehr	At The Embroidery Frame		SWEDEN, Stockholm, Nationalmuseum
Hinkle, Clarnece	Woman In A Hammock	1928	USA CA Orange County Museum of Art
Hodler, Ferdinand	Hahende Frau (Sewing Woman)	1885	SUISSE Zurich private collection
Homer, Winslow.	Woman Sewing,	c 1879.	USA DC Corcoran Gallery of Art
Honghai, Pan Soil	House By The Water Lane		CHINA
	Embroidering	1997	CHINA
	The Weaving Girl	1996	CHINA
	Bathed In The Golden Rays Of The Morning Sun	1997	CHINA
	Girl Nan Nan	1986	CHINA
Hopper, Edward	East Side Interior	1922	USA CA Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
Hullenkremer, Oscar	Navajo Girls Knitting For The War Effort	1944??	USA NM Gallery in Santa Fe
Hunt, William Holman	Lady Sewing	1830	ENGLAND Manchester City Art Gallery
	The Lady Of Shalott	1885	USA CT Hartford Wadsworth Atheneum
Israels, Jozef	Interieur De Chaumière, La Ravaudeuse		FRANCE: Réunion des Musées Nationaux
	Expectation	1887	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art
	Sewing Class At Katwijk.		NETHERLANDS Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam
Jackson, Annie Hurlburt	Amy L. Boyden	1915	private collection
Jacquemart, Jules Ferdinanc	Young Woman With Knitting	1878	USA MN Minneapolis Institute of Arts
Jannson-Blommer, Eala	Spinning Woman	1846	FINLAND Helsinki Ateneum
Johnson, Eastman	The Brown Family	1869	USA CA San Francisco
Johnson, William H.	The Knitting Party	1941-42	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Juele, Jens	Portrait Of Karen Klingberg	1767	private collection

Artist	Work	Date	Museum
Kaulach, Hermann	Baby Holding Yarn	late 19thc	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art
Kerstig, Georg Friedrick		C 1814	
Khoroshilov Evgeni.	Rug Weavers In And Interior	1968	USA KY JONES FINE ART & ANTIQUES
Knowles, Mary	Self-Portrait In Wool	late 1700's	ENGLAND London--Kew Palace
Kobke	View From The Loft Of The Grain Store At The Bakery In Citadel.	1831	DENMARK Statens Museum for Kunst Copenhagen
Krohg	The Seamstress	1880	DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
Krøyer, P.S.	Marie Krøyer At Her Sewing	c.1890	private collection
	Ole Lene By Spinning Wheel`	1887	DENMARK Skagen
	The Artist's Wife	1891	DENMARK Skagen
Larsen, Knud Erik.	The Seamstress	1914	USA DC Guarisco Gallery
Larsson, Carl	Sewing	1988	SWEDEN note card
	Morisiustyttö--The Bridesmaid	1908	FINLAND Helsinki Ateneum
Le Basque, Henri	La Famille Sous La Lampe		FRANCE Réunion des Musées Nationaux
Leibl, Wilhelm.	The Spinner	1892	GERMANY, Leipzig Museum of Fine Arts
Lemaire, Madeleine Jeanne	The Embroidery Lesson		ENGLAND Worcester Bindery Galleries
Lenoir, Charles-Amable	The Lacemaker		USA MI Hermitage Gallery Rochester
Leyster, Judith	Man Offering Money To A Young Woman	1631	NETHERLANDS,The Hague, Mauritshuis
Liebermann, Max	The Flax Workers	1898	GERMANY Berlin
Longhi, Pietro	A Lady Receiving A Cavalier	1750-59	ENGLAND London National Gallery
Lucas-Pobiquet, Marie-Aimee	A Seamstress And Her Daughter In Volendaam	1864	USA DC Guarisco
Lund, Age	Needlework	early 1900's	GERMANY Dusseldorf Galerie G. Paffrath,
Lundahl, Amelie	A Breton Girl	1883	NETHERLANDS Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
Mac Nee, Sir Daniel	Lady In Grey	19 cent.	SCOTLAND Edinburgh National Gallery
Macmonnies, Mary Fairchildm	In The Nursery	1897-98	USA IL Daniel Terra Collection - Chicago?
Macrae, Elmer	The Upper Porch At The Holley House	1900	private collection
Maes, Nicholas	The Engraver Robert Mays And His Wife Maria Nozeman	1587	The Corporation of London, Mansion House
	The Lacemaker		USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art - NY
	A Woman Making Lace	1655	
Magnasco, Alessandro	Nuns At Work	early 18th c	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art
Maratti, Carlo	The Annunciation	17th century	USA CA Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
Marchal, Charles François	Penelope	1868	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art
Margretson, W.H.	Last Minute Stitch	1915	USA DC Guarisco
Margulies, Joseph	New England Granny	c.1950	USA CA Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
Marquet, Albertt.	Milliners	1901	RUSSIA St.Petersburg The Hermitage
Marstrand, Wilhelm.	Familien Waagepetersen		DENMARK Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst
Massucci, Agostino	The Annunciation	1748	DENMARK Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst
Maximov, Vasily	It's All In The Past.	1889	RUSSIA MoscowTretyakov Gallery,

Artist	Work	Date	Museum
Melchers, Gari	Penelope	1910	USA DC Corcoran
	Young Woman Sewing	1919	USA DC Belmont, the Gari Melchers Estate Fred'bg
Mercier, Philip	A Girl Sewing	ca. 1750	ENGLAND London - Tate
Metcalf, Willard	Goose Girl	1884	private collection
	Summer At Waterford	1917-1918	USA NY Berry-Hill Galleries
Meteyard, Sidney	I Am Half-Sick Of Shadows	1913	ENGLAND private collection, Julian Hartnoll
Metsu, Gabriel	A Young Lace Maker		RUSSIA St.Petersburg The Hermitage
	Woman Sewing In A Niche	1650's	RUSSIA Moscow Pushkin Museum of Fine Art
Millais, John	Mariana		ENGLAND Tate or private collection
Miller, Richard Emil	Untitled		USA Phillips Auctioneers
Millet, Francis David	The Window Seat	1883	USA MI - Manoogian Collection
Millet, Jean-François	Shephardess Knitting Outside The Village Of Barbizon	1860-62	USA MA Museum of Fine Art - Boston
	Seated Spinner Emelie Millet	1854	USA MA Museum of Fine Art - Boston
	Standing Spinner	1853-55	USA MA Museum of Fine Art - Boston
	La Tricoteuse		FRANCE Réunion des Musées Nationaux
	Knitting Lesson	1874	USA MO St. Louis Art Museum
	Le Bouquet De Marguerites	1871-74	FRANCE Paris: D'Orsay
	Woman Sewing Beside A Window	1855-56	USA MA Museum of Fine Art - Boston
	Knitting Lesson Ii	1860	USA MA Museum of Fine Art - Boston
	Sewing Lesson	1874	USA MA Museum of Fine Art - Boston
	Une Bouquet De Marguerites		FRANCE Réunion des Musées Nationaux
	La Tricoteuse	1852	FRANCE Reunion des Musees Nationaux
	Knitting Lesson I	c 1854	USA MA Museum of Fine Art - Boston
	La Coseuse		FRANCE Réunion des Musées Nationaux
	Woman Sewing Her Sleeping Child		USA MA Museum of Fine Art - Boston
	Young Woman Spinning	1850-52	USA MA Museum of Fine Art - Boston
Woman Sewing By Lamplight		USA MA Museum of Fine Art - Boston	
Moelenas, Jan Miense	Young Woman Spooling Thread		RUSSIA St.Petersburg The Hermitage
Monet, Claude	Camille Au Metier	1875	USA PA Barnes Collection
	Camile Monet And A Child In The Artist's Garden Inargenteuil	1875	USA MA Museum of Fine Arts - Boston #1976.833
Moon, Carl	Navajo Weaver	1937-43	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
	Hopi Weaver	1937-43	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
	Hopi Woman Weaving Plaques	1937-43	USA DC Smithsonian Am Art Museum
Morisot. Berthe	Pasie Cousant Dans E Jardin De Bougival	1881	FRANCE: Musée de Beaux Art Pau
	The Artist's Daughter Julie With Her Nanny (Aka The Sewing Lesson)	1885	USA MN Minneapolis Institute of Arts
	Les Lilas A Maurecourt	1874	collection particuliere
	Woman Sewing	1879	USA NY Buffalo Albright Knox Art Gallery

Artist	Work	Date	Museum
	Young Woman Knitting		USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art - NYR
	Young Woman Sewing In The Garden	1884	
Morrice, James Wilson	Girl Knitting Near St. Malo	1896	CANADA MONTREAL National Gallery of
Munier, Emile.	Companions	late 19th Century	USA DC Guarisco Gallery
Netscher, Caspar	The Lacemaker	1664	ENGLAND London, The Wallace Collection
Nourse, Elizabeth	Happy Days	1905	USA MI - Detroit Institute of Art
Olla Y Cestero, Francisco	L'etudiant		FRANCE Réunion des Musées Nationaux
Ovganova, Yazur	Women Of The World	2000?	TURKMENISTAN - Women of the World
Paxton, Elizabeth Vaughan Okie	The Open Window	1922	USA MA Museum of Fine Arts Boston
Paxton, William Mcgregor	Woman Sewing	19th-20 c	USA MI Detroit Institute of Art
Pearson, Marguerite Stuber	Sewing By The Fireplace	mid 20th century	USA NY Christie's Images
Perry, Lila Cabot	Child Sewing At A Window		PRIVATE COLLECTION
Pickersgill, Frederick Richard	A Honiton Lace Manufactory	1868	USA DC Guarisco
Pieters, Evert	Winding Yarn		USA DC Guarisco
Pintoricchioi	Fresco: Scenes From The Odyssey	c 1500	ENGLAND National Gallery - London
Pissarro, Camille	Deux Jeunes Paysannes Cousant Sous Les Arbres Pointoise	1881	GERMANY:Cologne Abels Gemalde-Galerie
	The Seamstress	1881	Giraudon
	Portrait Of Mme Pissarro Sewing Near A Window	1878-79	ENGLAND OXFORD,Ashmoleon Museum -
	Girl Sewing	???	???
	Young Girl Knitting	1879	USA MI - Univerisity of Michigan Museum of Art
	Hermitage Garden, Maison Rouge	1877	USA NV Las Vegas The Bellagio
Potter, Helen Beatrix	The Mice At Work: Threading The Needle From	1902	ENGLAND London Tate
Raphael, Joseph	Child Sewing	1916	USA CA Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
Redon, Odilon	Madame Arthur Fontaine (Marie Escudier)	1901	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art
	Madame Redon Brodant	????	FRANCE Réunion des Musées Nationaux
Rembrandt Van Rijn	Anna And The Blind Tobit		ENGLAND LONDON National Gallery -
Reni, Guido	The Girlhood Of Virgin Mary	1610's	RUSSIA St. Petersburg Hermitage
Renoir, Pierre Auguste	La Modiste	???	Sammlung Oskar Reinhart "Am" Romerholz,
	The Artist's Son Jean	1900	USA IL Art Institute of Chicago
	By The Seashore	1883	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art - NY
	Madame Theodore Charpentier		FRANCE: Réunion des Musées Nationaux
	Marie-Therese Durand Ruel Sewing	1882	USA MA Sterling & Francine Clark Art Institute
	Mlle. Lerolle Sewing (Cousant)	1896	USA OH Columbus Museum of Art - Ohio
	The Apple Seller	c 1890	USA OH The Cleveland Museum of Art
	Lady Sewing	1879	USA IL Art Institute of Chicago
	Children's Afternoon At Wargemeont	1884	GERMANY Nationalgalerie, Berlin
	A Girl Crocheting (Jeune Femme Cousant)	c. 1875	USA MA Sterling & Francine Clark Art Collection

Artist	Work	Date	Museum
	Child Sewing--Charcoal	1906	USA TX Houston
	Garden Scene	1887	
	Two Sisters On The Terrace	1881	USA IL Art Institute of Chicago
Repin, Ilya Efimovich	On The Turf Beach	1876	RUSSIA Leningrad State Russian Museum
Reynolds, Sir Joshua	Anne, 2nd Countess Of Albemarle	1780???	ENGLAND LONDON National Gallery -
	The Ladies Waldegrave	18 cent. c.1870	SCOTLAND, Edinburgh National Gallery
Ribot, Theodule	La Ravandeuse		FRANCE: Réunion des Musées Nationaux
Rivera Diego	The Weaver		USA IL Art Institute of Chicago
Robinson, Theodore	La Vachere	c. 1888	USA DC Nat'l Museum American Art
Roghman, Geertruyd.	Two Women Sewing	1650	NETHERLANDS Amsterdam Rijksmuseum,
Romney, George	Lady Hamilton At The Spinning Wheel	1782-86	ENGLAND, The Greater London Council
Roseland, Henry	Stitchin' Time		USA DC Guarisco Gallery
	Stitch-In-Time	American mid 20th	USA DC Guarisco Galleries
Rossetti, Dante Gabriel	The Girlhood Of Mary Virgin		ENGLAND LONDON Tate
Rotta, Antonio	A Stitch In Time	Italian	USA DC Guarisco Gallery
Rowlandson. Thomas	Two Women Sewing By Candlelight	19 century	ENGLAND LONDON Tate Gallery
Ruhtenberg, Cornelis	Sewing A Doll I	1970-72	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Schjerbeck, Helene	Girl Crocheting		FINLAND Helsinki Ateneum
Schuster, Donna	Woman Sewing	1909	private collection
Scott, John	A Pleasant Pastime		USA DC Guarisco
Seamons, Nancy	Thread Of Gold		CROOKSTON
Segantini, Giovanni	Girl Knitting	1888	SUISSE Kunsthau Zurich
Seiki, Kuroda	Woman Sewing	1909	JAPAN Kurume Ishibashi Museum of Art
Sharman, John	At The End Of The Porch	c. 1918	USA IN Indianapolis Museum of Art
Siberechtsi	Interior With Woman Embroidering And Rocking A Child	1671 Flemish	DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
Signac, Paul.	Milliners	1885	SUISSE Zurich Bührl collection
Simmons, Edward	Le Printemps		
Smidth, A	Stranger Asking His Way At The Farm On The Moor	1877	DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
Smith, Alfred	Portrait De La Mere De L'artiste		FRANCE: Réunion des Musées Nationaux
Smith, Grace Cossington.	The Sock Knitter	1915	AUSTRALIA Sydney The Art Gallery of New South
Smith, John Raphael	A Visit To Grandmother	1800?	USA CA Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
Soloman, Abraham	The Lion In Love		ENGLAND BRIDGMAN ART LIBRARY
Sonne, Jørgen	Rural Scene	1848	DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
Sorolla, Joaquin	Sewing The Sail	1896	ITALY Venice Galleria Internazionale d'Arte
Stanwick, John Malhuish	A Golden Thread	ca. 1900	ENGLAND London - Tate
Steinlein. Theophile-Alexandret	Des Brodeuses Au Métier Et À L'aiguille		FRANCE: Réunion des Musées Nationaux
Stone, Marcus	In Love	1888	ENGLAND Nottingham - Castle Museum

Artist	Work	Date	Museum
Stuart, Gilbert	Miss Dick & Her Cousin Miss Forster	1792-1797	USA NC Winston Salem Collection of Mr.Mrs Philip
	Mrs. Richard Yates Sewing	1793-94	USA DC National Gallery of Art
Tarbell, Edmund	My Three Granddaughters	1937	USA private collection
	Josephine Knitting	1916	USA DC The Corcoran Gallery
	Josephine Knitting	1916	USA DC Corcoran Gallery of Art
	Mother, Mercie, And Mary	1918	USA private collection
	Mother And Mary	1922	USA DC National Gallery of Art
	The Lesson		
	My Family	1914	USA Senator and Mrs John Rockefeller IV
Toma, Gioacchino	Luisa Sanfelice In Carcere	1874	ITALY Napoli Museo di Capodimonte
Torajiro, Kojima.	Begonia Field	1910	JAPAN Kurashiki Ohara Museum
Toulouse-Lautrec	Woman Before A Mirror		USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art
Tropinin, Vasily	The Lacemaker	1823	RUSSIA Moscow Tretyakov Gallery,
Tura, Cosimo & Francesco, Cossa	Triumph Of Minerva	c. 1470	
Tuxen, Laurits	The Artist's Second Wife With Daughters In The Garden At Skagen	1922	DENMARK Skagen
	The Artist's Mother Bertha Tuxen With Her Grandchild Nina	1902	DENMARK private collection
Van Brekelham	A Tailor's Shop	1655-60	ENGLAND London National Gallery
	The Spinner	1653	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art
	Tailor's Workshop	1661.	NETHERLANDS Amsterdam Rijksmuseum,
Van Gogh, Vincent	Sien Sewing,	1883	NETHERLANDS Museum Boijmans van Beuningen
	Seamstresses, (After Edouard Frère)		NETHERLANDS Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam
	Tisserand À Son Métier	1884	NETHERLANDS Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam
	Tisserand À Son Métier	1884	NETHERLANDS Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam
	Vieil Homme En Train De Bobiner	1884	NETHERLANDS Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam
	Naaiende Vrouw (Woman Sewing)	1885	NETHERLANDS Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam
	La Veillée (The Evening) (D'apres Millet)		NETHERLANDS Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam
	Wever Bij Een Open Raampje (Weaver With An Open Window)	1884	GERMANY Bayerische Staatsgemalde-sammlung
Van Heemskik, Maerten	.Portrait Of Anna Codde	1128 AD	NETHERLANDS Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
Van Mieiris, Willem	Ein Handlerin		AUSTRIA Salzburger Landessammlungen
Van Rysselberghe.	Family In An Orchard	1890	RUSSIA St.Petersburg The Hermitage
Van Slaveren, Jan Adreaenz	Domestic Scene		DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
Vanloo, Charles	A Spanish Reading		RUSSIA St.Petersburg The Hermitage
Vanloo, Jacob.	Merry Company		RUSSIA St.Petersburg The Hermitage
Velazquez, Diego	The Needlewoman	1640-1650	USA DC National Gallery of Art
Verehren, Frederick	A Jutland Shepherd On Themoor	1855	DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
Vermeer, Jan	The Little Street	1657-58	NETHERLANDS Rijksmuseum
	The Lacemaker	c. 1665	FRANCE Paris Louvre

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Von Der Lancken, Frank	The Sisters	1903	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Von Mieris, Willem	Eine Handelrin		AUSTRIA Salzburger Landessammlungen
Votila, Auskust	Interior From A Musical Home	1879	FINLAND Helsinki Ateneum
Vuillard, Edouard	Interior With Figure	1896	USA NY Lehman Collection NYC
	Madame Vuillard At The Window	1926	FRANCE private collection Paris
	Dressmaking	1892-95	USA CA San Francisco
	Madame Adrien Benard		FRANCE Réunion des Musées Nationaux
	Embroidering By The Window	1895-96	USA NY Museum of Modern Art
	La Ravandeuse		FRANCE Réunion des Musées Nationaux
	Deux Femmes Brodant Sous Une Veranda		FRANCE Réunion des Musées Nationaux -D'Orsay
	Room Under The Eaves	1897	USA IL private collection Chicago
	Woman Sewing Before A Garden	1895	USA MA Museum of Fine Arts Boston
Waterhouse, John William	I Am Half Sick Of Shadows" Said The Lady Of Shallott	1916	CANADA Toronto Art Gallery of Ontario
	Penelope & The Suitors	1912	SCOTLAND , Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museum
	Fair Rosamond	1917	ENGLAND London Christie's
	The Lady Of Shalott	1894	ENGLAND, Leeds, City Art Gallery
	The Lady Of Shalott	1888	ENGLAND London Tate Gallery
	La Fileuse	1874	private collection of Claudio Bruni Sakraischik
Watkins, Anthony	A New Scarf	2001 Caod	USA MA Tree's Place - Cape Cod
Wegman, Berthe	Mme Keekampk, The Artist's Sister		DENMARK Copenhagen Statens Museum for Kunst
Weir, Julia Alden	Knitting For The Soldiers	1918	ENGLAND The Phillips collection
Weir, J. Alden	Summer Aka Friends	1898	USA private collection
West, Sir Benjamin	Miss Anne Eliza Morrith At Her Embroidery Frame	c 1773-78	ENGLAND kind permission of Sir Andrew Merritt
	Queen Charlotte Knotting		ENGLAND Collection of Her Majesty
Whistler, James Macneill	Tatting	c. 1890	USA NY Glens Fall - the Hyde Collection
White, William	Florence Nightingale & Her Sister Parthenope	1836	ENGLAND, National Portrait Gallery London
Whitlock, Mary Ursula	Woman Knitting	c. 1900	USA DC Smithsonian American Art Museum
Wiley, Catherine	Willow Pond	1914	USA NY Metropolitan Museum of Art NY
Zurburan, Francisco De	The Young Virgin	ca 1650	USA, NY Metropolitan Museum of Art
	The Girlhood Of The Virgin	C 1660	RUSSIA St. Petersburg Hermitage
Yu Shi Xu	Paper Cut--Woman Embroidering	2000	CHINA - Women of the World