

the
stitchbook
COLLECTIVE 2022

Workshop 4 of 12

Rag Textiles, Stitch/Slash, Faux Chenille & Visible Darning

These notes should be read in conjunction with the online video



www.untangledthreads.co.uk/MEMBERS

Video Password: rag

Rag Textiles, Stitch/Slash & Visible Darning

00:00.00	Introduction	3
02:15.22	Project 1 Rag Textiles Examples	4 5
07:19.14	Project 2 Visible Mending	6
21:48.03	Project 3 Faux Chenille Examples	7 8
40:03.21	Project 4 Stitch & Slash	9
52:10.15	Using fabric/rag/scrap techniques in other work	10
	Contemporary Culture	11

Rag Textiles, Stitch/Slash, Faux Chenille & Visible Darning

Introduction

This is, without a doubt, one of my favourite workshops, because it looks at ways of using up all of those scraps and thread ends which we are so loathed to get rid of, but often don't know exactly what to do with.



This workshop will show you 4 different ways of creating exciting and tactile surfaces to stitch into, just using scraps of left over fabrics and threads.

We will also explore the design possibilities of using samples of these techniques to create larger pieces of fabric, accessories or clothing. whilst recognising the cultural differences between Sashiko, Boro, Kantha and Slow Stitch.



Explore the Japanese practice of Boro (patching 'rags' to form new pieces of fabric)



Learn to darn and patch fabric decoratively, using an embroidery hoop and variegated wool and/or cotton thread.



Explore the possibilities of Faux Chenille.



Look at Stitch & Slash techniques as well as Fabric Manipulation (using hand or machine stitching)



Project 1: RAG TEXTILES (Boro)

Derived from the Japanese *boroboro* meaning something tattered or repaired, Boro is the practice of reworking textiles to extend their use. Threadbare areas are patched and older garments are cut up and reformed into useable fabric, using running stitches sewn through overlapping layers.

Use a piece of calico or other fine material as a 'backing fabric' for your rag textile. (You will find that muslin is often used as a backing)

Arrange the scraps onto the calico. You can add scraps of different thickness or texture.

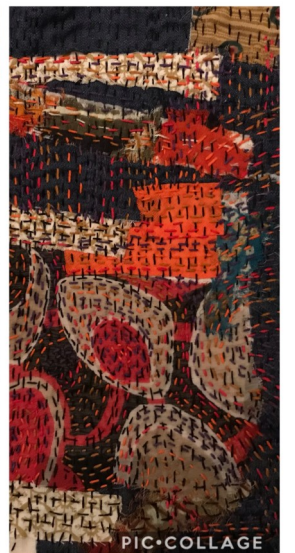
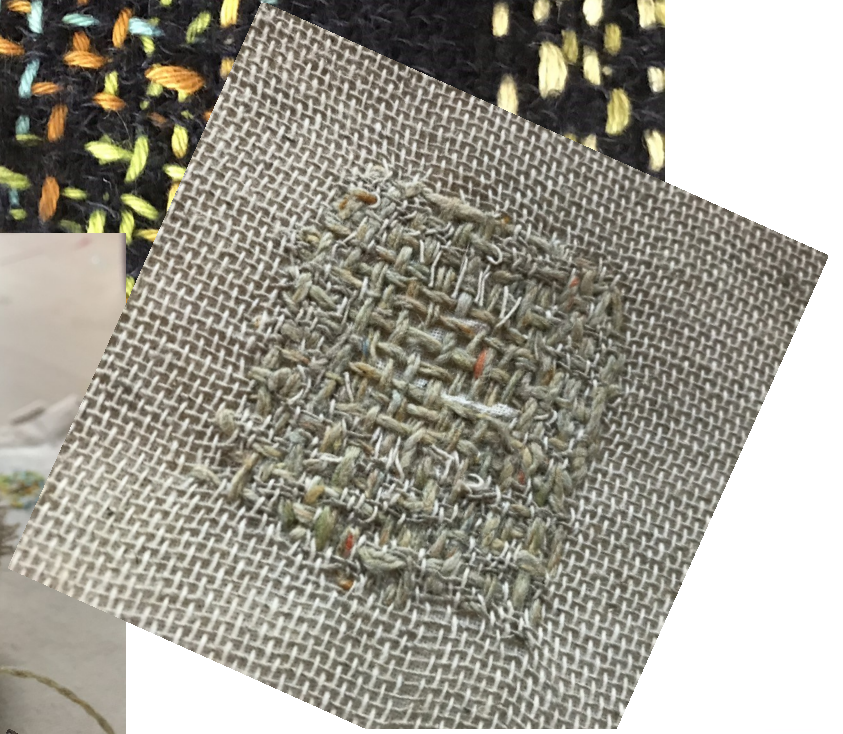
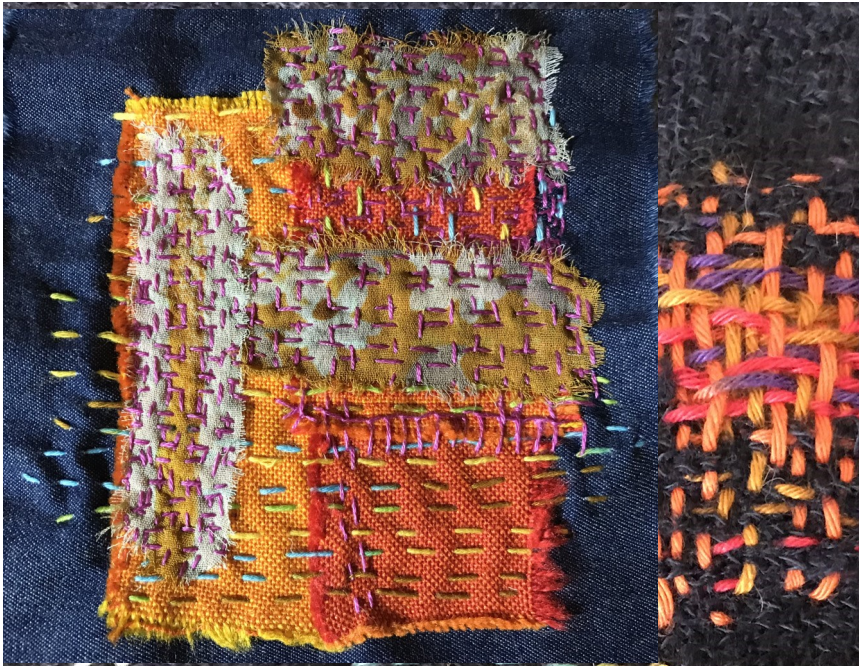
Pin and then tack the pieces into place. *The tacking can become part of the finished surface, or you can remove it later.*

Using freeform stitching, make small stitches through the layers of rags to unify the piece of work. *Make sure that at least some of your stitches bridge any loose edges.*

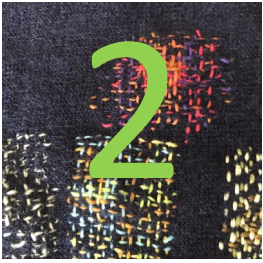
Try using a variety of stitches as well as running stitch.

Let the stitches lead you. You can follow patterns in the fabric, or impose a pattern of stitches. Just follow your needle wherever it wants to go.





PIC-COLLAGE



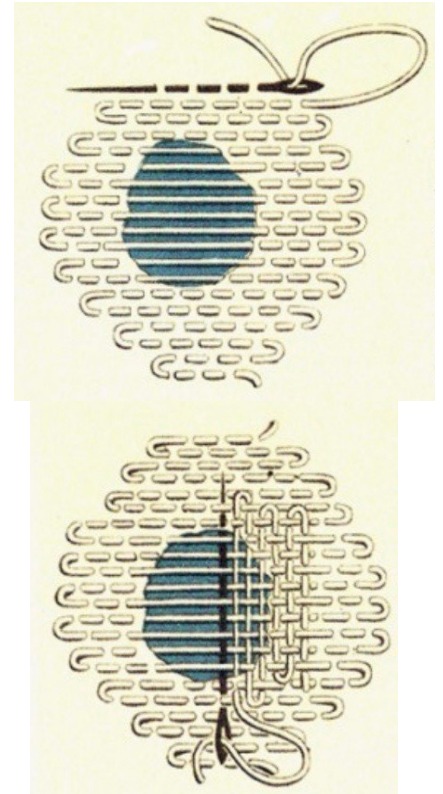
Project 2: VISIBLE MENDING

Darning has become quite fashionable again - not necessarily to mend socks, but as a wonderfully meditative pastime rather than a chore... honestly!

Darning requires tension on the fabric. Traditionally a darning mushroom would be used, but a small embroidery hoop will do just as well. For larger pieces of fabric, move the hoop around to find fresh sections of fabric to work on. Use a tapestry needle for darning onto jersey fabric or knitting. The tapestry needle is perfect for this, because it doesn't have a sharp point, so is less likely to split the yarn.

If you haven't used an embroidery hoop before:

- Loosen the screw on the hoop and separate the two elements.
- Place the inner hoop flat onto your working surface.
- Lay the fabric on top, then press the outer hoop down over the top, trapping the fabric between the hoops.
- Tighten the screw using a small screwdriver if necessary.
- You are now ready to darn.
- The diagram shows you how to form the equivalent of warp and weft.

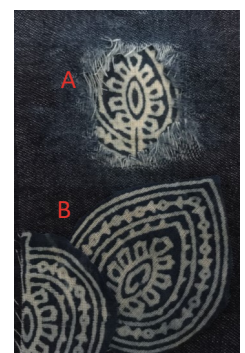
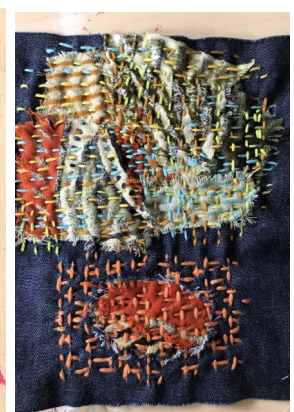


PATCHING

You can add patches to mend holes in fabric from either side. In this example A is patched from the inside, B from the outside. Pin and tack a piece of fabric under or over the hole. Using small running or stab stitches, stitch over the entire area, unifying the patches and the fabric.

*Note: instead of using a single piece of fabric as a patch, you could use a piece rag fabric to cover the hole. Pin and tack the rag fabric over the hole **before stitching**, and then stitch through ALL layers.*

The variations and combinations of colour, texture and design of patching and rag textiles that you can make are virtually infinite.





Project 3: FAUX CHENILLE

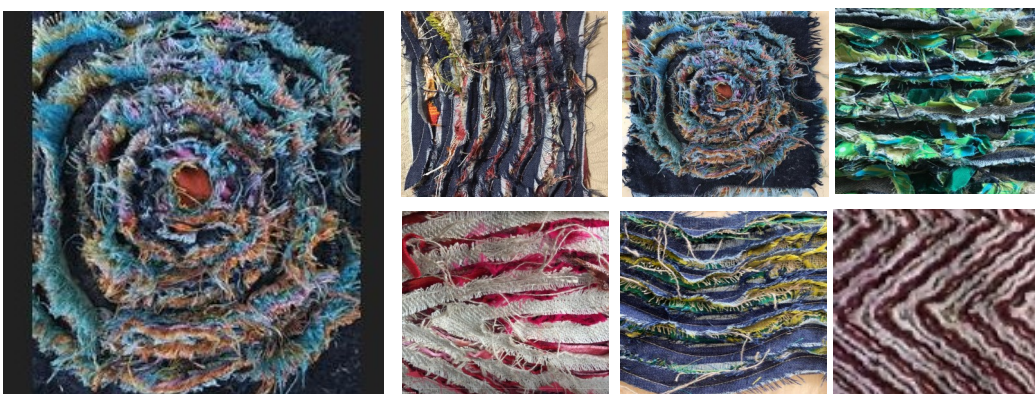
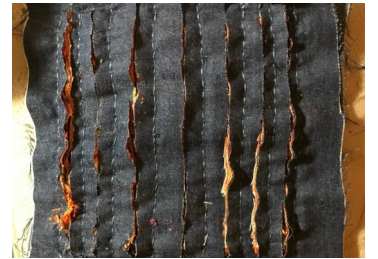
Chenille is the French word for caterpillar. *The term 'Chenille' in textiles*, refers to either a type of soft textured yarn or the fabric which is made from it.

Faux Chenille is layered fabric made using a stitch and slash technique, which imitates Chenille.

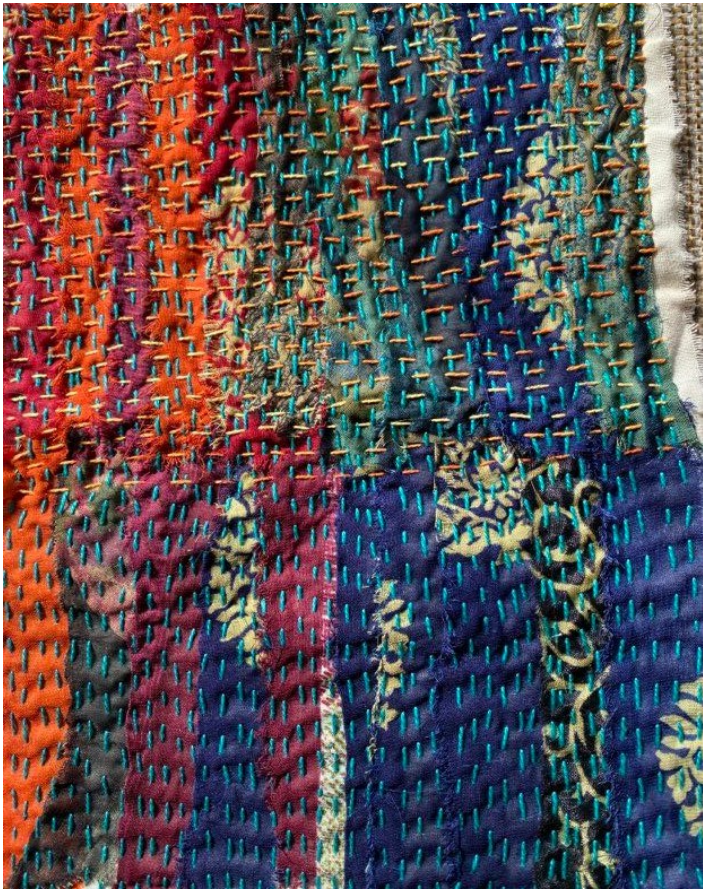
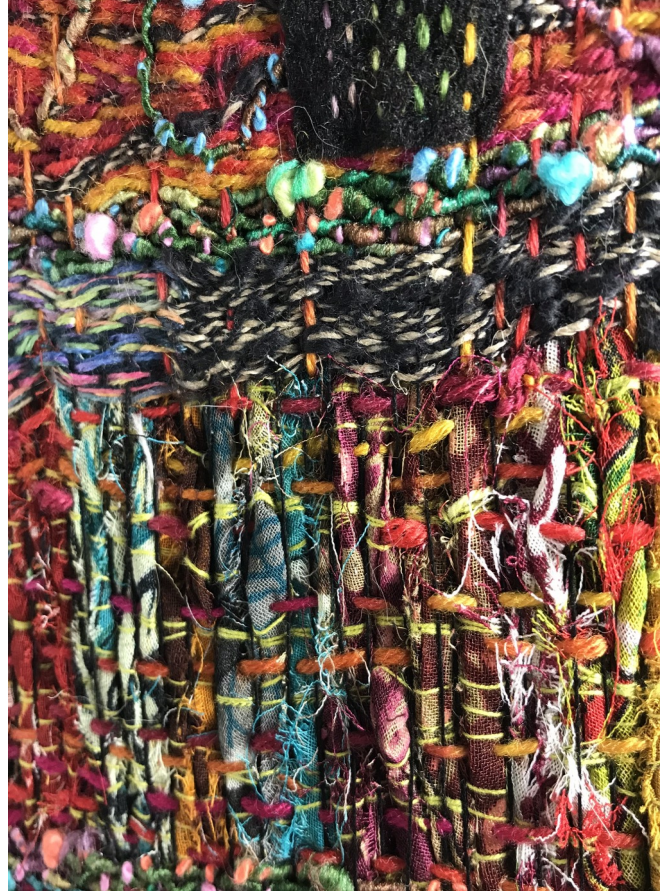
- Take 3 or 4 pieces of fabric and make them into a pile. You need to stitch through ALL the layers..
- Make your lines no less than 1cm apart for this first sample. You can use machine or hand stitching.
- When you have finished stitching all of the rows, you need to take a sharp pair of scissors and cut BETWEEN the rows of stitching. **Be careful only to cut through the top layers and leave the base layer intact.**
- Take the wire brush and gently brush the cut edges in a variety of directions. You will find that if you brush across the rows, you will get a different effect than if you brush up and down.
- Trim off any unsightly threads. If you like the effect, you can leave your work at this stage, but to make the full 'chenille effect' you need to wash & dry then trim the work.
- For small samples you will find that using soap, rubbed into the fabric under a running tap, is sufficient, but if you are making a much larger piece of faux chenille, I would recommend putting it into the washing machine on a short cycle.

** As well as using complete layers of fabric, faux chenille is brilliant for using up all of those little scraps of fabric - you know - the ones that you didn't want to throw away, but you had no idea what you would do with them!*

Lay the piece of calico down, and put the scraps of fabric and thread onto one half. Fold the calico over to form a sandwich. You will then need to iron and pin the work. Stitch rows of backstitch, as in the previous sample, then cut and brush the surface as before. This will create an effect more like fake fur!



Why not try making samples with straight rows or maybe use circles or curves?






Project 4: STITCH & SLASH and MANIPULATION

You may find this technique easier if you have access to a sewing machine. There is a full demonstration on the video.


This is the same basic technique as faux chenille, but the designs and patterns you can make are much more adventurous. I will show you the technique using wool felt to begin with, because it doesn't fray, and is easier to see the defined shapes and patterns which you can achieve. Stitch & Slash techniques are most successful if you only use 2 or 3 layers of fabric; any more and the finished fabric becomes unmanageably bulky.

Fabrics with different amounts of 'fray' have a very different visual outcomes.









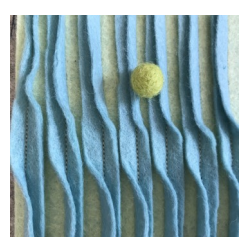
Layers stitched and slashed like faux chenille samples .



Layers ironed in one direction and stitched into columns about 5cm apart.



Fabric between the columns of stitching ironed in the opposite direction and stitched in place.

USING FABRIC/RAG/SCRAP TECHNIQUES IN OTHER WORK



Samples of rag textiles, faux chenille and stitch & slash can be stitched together to form one large patchwork of fabric. This could then be used to make garments, or accessories such as bags or book covers. Make sure that all of your samples have been washed and dried BEFORE stitching into **a patchwork to avoid eccentric shrinkage.**



I often use stitch & slash with fabric and newspaper. In my own artwork this becomes a useful motif representing geological layers.



CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

The terms 'Sashiko' and 'Boro' have been misappropriated in today's craft world and are often used interchangeably with the term 'Kantha' (another rich tradition from Bangladeshi culture). As slow stitchers and artists, I believe we have a duty to respect all culture and tradition. **Our work should really only ever be described as slow stitch 'inspired by.'**

Definitions:

Sashiko: (Japanese) a form of decorative stitching, geometric patterns made with regular lengths of running stitch. (it is a verb: i.e to sashiko)

Sashiko thread: generally made from cotton. Not stranded like embroidery thread. It is made from fine threads twisted together to make a single yarn.

Boro: (Japanese) the fabric made from continuous repetition of stab stitching together pieces of rag.

Kantha: (Bangladeshi) form of embroidery using running stitches which are shorter on the back than the front (which gives traditional dimpling to the surface). Several layers of fine fabric are stacked and stitched together into a thin piece of cushioned fabric.

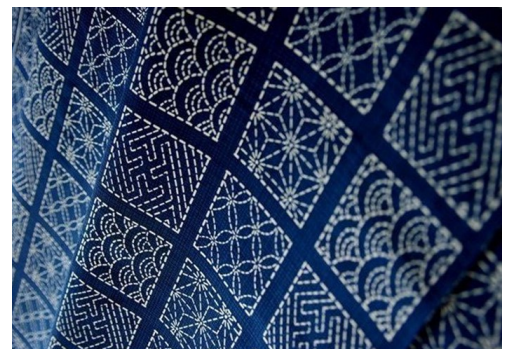
Slow Stitch: Mindful and Contemplative Sewing using needle and thread.



Traditional Sashiko

The Japanese word Sashiko means 'little stabs'. Together with the development of Boro, Sashiko has its roots in ancient Japanese farming and fishing culture. Purely aesthetic Sashiko embroidery can be traced back to the 8th century.

Crucial elements of traditional Sashiko are stitch consistency and geometric patterns made with white thread on an indigo fabric. There is a rich history and meaning attached to these patterns, many of which are simplified representations of nature. They symbolise such things as fertility or prosperity.



If you are interested in traditional Sashiko embroidery there are many patterns, kits, materials etc available online.

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Next Workshop



May:
Couched Lines, Lettering & Laid Work

7th May 2022

Workshop 5 of 12

A list of supplies needed for this workshop will be announced in the next Newsletter (April 18th 2022) and online www.untangledthreads.co.uk