THE VALIDITY OF "WOMEN'S WORK" AS A FORM OF ART

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CROSS STICH

Cross-stitch is a form of sewing and a popular form of counted-thread embroidery in which X-shaped stitches (called cross stitches) in a tiled, raster-like pattern are used to form a picture.

Cross-stitch can be found all over the world since the Middle Ages. Many folk museums show examples of clothing decorated with cross-stitch, especially from continental Europe and Asia.

EMBROIDERY

Sewing/Embroidery dates back at least 20,000 years when early humans used bone and animal sinew to stitch skins. Over centuries, sewing evolved from a survival skill into an essential domestic and economic activity, especially after the invention of the sewing machine in the 19th century. Historically, it became associated with women's work and was often undervalued due to sexist attitudes, despite its technical and creative demands. Today, sewing is increasingly recognized as a skilled artform and it should be respected for its cultural, artistic, and practical contributions.

COLLAGE

FELTING

Wool felt is one of the oldest known textiles, dating back to the 5th century B.C in East Asia. Wool was packed then covered in water in a process where the material was rolled and beaten until the wool interlocked creating one solid textile. In the late 19th century this process was revolutionized with the invention of the needle punch felting machine, designed to mass produce felt without moisture. A crafty spin-off of this process using one needle to create 3D items is attributed to David and Eleanor Stanwood, who pioneered the method in the 1980's.

DISCUSSION

"Women's work" is a phrase used for the invisible jobs that women have done throughout history. From homemaking to childcare, a woman's role is often undervalued and invisible. In artwork, this refers to cross-stich, embroidery, and more recently, felting. Throughout MHC 10101, our group went to many museums (the MET, MOMA, the Guggenheim). We chose to focus on Women's Work after reflecting on the art pieces we saw across NYC and after reading the work of our professor, novelist Carmen Boullosa.