

INSPIRED to stitch

INSPIRED TO STITCH – CLAUDIA JAEGGI NESSLER

Swiss artist Claudia Jaeggi Nessler was born to create with thread. Both of her grandmothers had careers in textiles – one was a couture dressmaker and the other was a textile arts teacher.



DEEPLY ROOTED, PAINTED SILK, HAND EMBROIDERY, WOOL FELT. CLAUDIA JAEGGI NESSLER, 2014

As a 21st Century stitcher, Claudia (a.k.a. Weissfeder) has moved beyond the traditions of her grandmother's craft into the world of highly textured, richly colored, mixed media embroidered artwork.

Her work is infused with images from the natural world, which surround her in her home near Zurich. Mostly self taught, Claudia is pushing her skills to the next level by taking an online course for advanced contemporary embroiderers at the Atelier Anne Lange in Germany. She is a methodical artist and is unafraid to experiment with approaches to creating.



LICHEN AND MOSS ON CONCRETE. HAND EMBROIDERY AND MIXED MEDIA. 2014.

Not surprising, given her family connection to textiles, Claudia has a rich sense of Swiss textile arts history and is using social media to connect and promote other Swiss embroidery artists.

What follows is an interview about her process that we conducted via email in May and June of 2015.



LEAF. HAND EMBROIDERY ON CARDBOARD. 2014.

You're from one of the most beautiful places in the world, the Swiss Alps. Much of the source imagery of your artwork seems to come from nature. Plants, mushrooms, flowers and trees appear in series. You go beyond a literal representation of these objects, playing with color and texture. What is your approach to translating, say, an image of a leaf into embroidered art?

There are three different approaches, actually.

1. The one I use most frequently is to go for extended walks, look at the different plants, take photographs (both whole-body shots and a close-ups). Then I sketch the plant (mostly in pencil, but sometimes also with other drawing media), decide on a color chart and think of which stitches will translate the sketch into embroidery. Then I start embroidering.



JUST GRATEFUL, 2014.

2. An approach I've only use few times (e.g. when a customer wants "something kitschy with roses") is to decide on a few of the stitches that work particularly well for creating embroidered plants. I then go for a walk or look through pictures to find a plant that could well be embroidered with these stitches. Then I sketch the plant portrait and stitch it.

3. Currently, I am experimenting with yet another approach. (I don't know the outcome yet!) I collect blossom leaves and dry them, then put the dried leaf on a fabric background and just "visibly mend and/or adorn" the real leaf.



MIXED MEDIA BOOK PAGE, 2014.

How do you organize the images you translate into stitch? Do you keep a sketchbook, take photographs or clip files of the world around you?

I keep sketchbooks and take a lot of photographs. I don't like mood boards at all. They're too messy for me –I am a bit neurotic...



DRIED ROSE PETALS, MENDED AND EMBROIDERED. 2015.

I'm particularly taken with how you mix media in your artwork. You paint silk and include found objects into embroidered assemblages, as well as photographs and text. What does mixing mediums bring to your artwork?

When I was a teenager, I used to draw with pencils and paint with watercolors a lot. At around 18, I had made a collection of five bigger pieces and wanted to frame them. For framing, I used cheap wholesale frames. Looking at my paintings in those frames, I thought about how it would be nice to make the cheap frames more beautiful or interesting... and it suddenly came to me that the frame could be incorporated in the whole picture. I started painting the frames as well and adorning them with beads and found objects... I think this was the sparkle that fanned the flames of my interest in adding other media to my art projects.



DETAIL FROM MIXED MEDIA PIECE. EMBROIDERY, WOOD, FOUND OBJECTS.

I particularly love adding something wooden to my embroideries, as nature is probably my greatest source of inspiration. It is only appropriate to add something found in nature to my works about nature.

Besides, wood smells so good. I am a “Schnüffelnase” (“sniffy nose” in English??) indeed!



EAST MEETS WEST, MIXED MEDIA.

So, mixing mediums in my artwork:

1. Addresses additional senses [beyond experiencing the art visually.
2. Emphasizes the purpose and/or the inspiration source of the artwork.
3. Personalizes the artwork.

You've shown your work in galleries and you share your work online — on your website and on Instagram. What role, if any, does your online community have in your creative life? What is the value to you of sharing your work online and engaging with other makers?



URURENI.

In Switzerland, hand embroidery is only a small niche in the art market. (This used to be different in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.) So to show my work and get some feedback, I gave the social media a try. (I was not a social media gal before.)

I found that especially in the English speaking countries and in Asia, hand embroidery is very “hip” and that my work attracted some interest. After a few months online, I decided to “come out as a fibre artist” locally. I contacted a gallery and an atelier, which to my great surprise were both very interested in showing and selling my art.



LISSY, HAND EMBROIDERED PORTRAIT.

And then this spring, I found great use again of the social media. In an effort to bring (back) Swiss hand embroidery into the spotlight and to build a network, I founded the Swiss Hand Embroiderers' Guild with a group page on Facebook. It connects to an online gallery, which I curate, featuring Swiss embroidery artists' works.



NOT LOOKING BACK, PAINTED SILK, HAND EMBROIDERY. 2014.

There is also a blog associated where I feature artists as well as blog about the history of the Swiss textile industry.

To sum up, sharing my interest via social media has allowed me to get to know many fibre artists in my home country and abroad, and I am very thankful for that!



MOM, 2014.

Finally, what are you currently working on or what new projects are you excited about in the near future?

One of my current projects that I love a lot is my embroidered book. It is a story titled “Ribbon in Grey” and it is about a Medieval wet nurse and her struggle for survival and love.

I wrote this story myself, as writing is my other great passion in art. The book is in free verse form (in English – don’t ask me why, it is not my mother tongue, I just liked it for this particular story.) Each “chapter” is illustrated with embroidery assemblages. So this project allows me to combine my two most loved ways of expression: story telling and hand embroidery!



RAPE, 2014.

In the near future, I want to do an embroidered landscape series of places of my home town. I plan to adorn the needle felted and stitched landscapes with small objects I found in exactly these places. This project is only an early draft.



SWISS ARTIST CLAUDIA JAEGGI NESSLER.

Be sure to follow Claudia on Instagram. She is incredibly prolific and her lovely hand embroideries are huge sources of inspiration. She is pushing the boundaries with her use of paint and found objects.

I'm so excited to see her embroidered book progress!

You can find her online here:

Facebook fanpage: [weissfederembroideryart](#)

Website: [Weissfeder](#)

Instagram: [@weissfeder](#)

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