

## Exquisite Threads: English Embroidery 1600s–1900s

NGV INTERNATIONAL

2 APR – 12 JUL 2015



England, Cornwall  
Coverlet (c. 1700) (detail)  
silk (satin, thread), gilt-metal (thread)  
131.0 x 127.0 cm  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Presented through the NGV  
Foundation by Mrs Jessica Taylor (née  
Durnford) and family, Member, 2001  
2001.309

Embroidery has long held a significant role in the history of English textiles. This exhibition will chart the distinctive highlights of English embroidery over three hundred years from the seventeenth through to the early twentieth century. The NGV owns a fine collection of the work of English domestic and professional embroiderers dating from the Stuart dynasty to modern times. Many of these works, including an exceptional raised needlework picture from the mid-seventeenth century and samplers spanning some three centuries, have not been displayed for generations.

*Exquisite Threads* will display nearly sixty works through the themes of Education, Fashion and the Home each representing important aspects of embroidery's role within English life. For centuries, the making of samplers and embroidered pictures with moral and biblical themes was an important part of a young lady's education. Fashionable dress and accessories in England relied greatly on needlework and the exhibition features a fine early seventeenth-century Coif, an eighteenth-century silk apron replete with botanical imagery, and a sample of embroidery designed by Norman Hartnell for a ball gown worn by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, during her Coronation tour of the Commonwealth. Outstanding works created for the home are seventeenth and eighteenth-century crewel work bed curtains, a silk and gold work embroidered Coverlet c.1700, and Arts and Crafts embroideries made by William Morris and Co. in the late nineteenth century.

### Student Programs

#### Introductory talk

**Recommended Years 5 – 12**

Though the fashion industry continually evolves, the basic function of clothing has not changed in centuries. Textiles still cover bodies and signify social code. Revisit the past to discover an era when fabric, threads and stitches were used to create works that were treasured for generations. This introductory talk investigates a range of embroidery techniques and the social and cultural significance of embroidery in different contexts including the home, fashion and civic commemorations and the influence of changing technology on this beautiful art form.

**Cost \$7**

#### The big stitch workshop

**Recommended Years 5 – 12**

Needlework is almost a lost art today. Introduce simple embroidery techniques to your students using non-traditional materials. This workshop aims to explore design elements and principles transferred into stitch.

**Cost \$16 (2 hours)**

#### Bookings and enquiries

03 8620 2340, 12–5pm weekdays

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