In **D(R)AAD. About embroidery as protest and healing,** the power of embroidery as a form of resistance and healing from trauma is central. D(R)AAD connects past and present by combining historical embroidery with contemporary artworks and initiatives that use embroidery as a social bond. This exhibition invites you to discover the power of the needle as an instrument for social involvement, activism, and personal healing.

Featuring: Maya Amer - Monika Auch - Andrea Dezsö - Feminist Handwerk Party - Fine Cell Work - Marian Jongsma - Patricia Kaersenhout - Lilly Lulay - Klaas Rommelaere - Anne Verhoijsen

Klaas Rommelaere, Marie-Therese (2020) and Bloemen Antwerpen (2020)
From the series Dark Uncles (2019 -2022) © Galerie Zink/Erich Spahn

Let Go and Cherish #1

D(R)AAD

About embroidery as protest and healing

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Made possible by, among others: Haarlem · het cultuurfonds · mondriaan fonds

January 27 - April 28, 2024

Groot Heiligland 47
www.verweymuseumhaarlem.nl

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About embroidery as protest and healing

The historic 'liberation skirt' that can be seen in the museum in the exhibition **Allemaal Haarlemmers**, (on the first floor), forms the rationale for **D(R)AAD. About embroidery as protest and healing.** This skirt gained symbolic value because women embroidered important years and memories on it after the Second World War. The idea came from resistance fighter, camp survivor and feminist Mies Boissevain-van Lennep (1896–1965). She called on women to wear the skirt during national and personal holidays, which also created new memories. The skirts were supposed to contribute to post-war solidarity and healing.

Embroidery has had various uses over the centuries, including the joining or repair of fabrics, for decoration or as an expression of status. However, the political meaning of embroidery is less well-known: it can be an expression of protest and a way to make your voice heard under difficult circumstances. Embroidery can also help process trauma and provide comfort in times of conflict, illness, and captivity.



Public programme
- February 29 evening with the Feminist Handicraft Party
- March 17 lecture on Tatriz, Palestinian embroidery by Fatima Abbadi
- March 21 – March 28 – April 4 – April 11 – April 18 Pick Up the Thread - mornings with Stella Toont

D(R)AAD

1

The Dark Uncles series by **Klaas Rommelaere** consists of a parade of embroidered life-size dolls inspired by the personal histories of family and friends. They are the result of a collective effort that started during the corona period. A call for embroiderers was responded to en masse. Rommelaere also works with his 'regular madams' from Merksem and Roeselare.

Lessons From My Mother (ongoing since 2007) by **Andrea Dezsö** consists of hand-embroidered motifs and texts that together can be considered an investigation into the myths that mothers told their daughters in Transylvania, Romania before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Dezsö's embroideries provide valuable insight into a pre-modern society that seems superstitious or ignorant, also with regard to the position of women. They serve as a way to reclaim the female voice in the contemporary art world.

The video Splitzij shows the long-term work process and performances of **Anne Verhoijsen** in collaboration with men in suits embroidering. In the years 1999-2002, Verhoijsen taught cross-stitch embroidery to more than a hundred men, decision-makers from the art world and the government, in groups of four. For example, a VVD councillor embroidered during a debate in the Amsterdam City Hall, and groups of men dressed in suits were put to work doing this 'typical women's job' in the corner window of De Bijenkorf in Amsterdam. The embroideries were eventually auctioned in aid of the Mama Cash Foundation, which supports feminist activism.

The **Feminist Handicraft Party** (FHP) is a feminist and activist movement that is concerned with studying, repairing, speaking, patching, unlearning, and mending - as they themselves put it. The FHP organises performative actions and workshops in which they emphasise the underexposed history of textile production within the daily reality of women. It wants to achieve a higher appreciation of care, maintenance, and repairs through its activities.

Embroidery can be an individual activity, but it can also bring people together by having a conversation or being silent together. It provides the opportunity for casual encounters in which a strong connection is tangible. This is part of the healing power that embroidery can have, and that can help in processing personal traumas, dents and bruises, or in highlighting underexposed histories.

2

Embroidery can be an affirmation of identity and self-esteem, materialised in thread and fabric. A way to find a 'voice', 'a sense of agency', under harsh circumstances. I embroider, therefore I exist. The embroidery pieces that **women made in captivity** in the Oranjehotel in Scheveningen and in internment camps on Java and Sumatra during the Second World War demonstrate this in a compelling way. The works prove how embroidery can be a way to process trauma or give it a place in times of captivity, conflict, and mourning. **Fine Cell Work** tries to give prisoners and ex-prisoners a future through embroidery. Stitch by stitch, people draw strength from embroidery.

Palestinian **Tatriz** is an age-old tradition in which Palestinian identity is preserved and passed on through embroidery. Originally it was practiced in the Palestinian countryside where the stitches symbolised local flora. Today it is used in refugee camps and the diaspora to tell stories of solidarity and resistance. Palestinian women protested the erasure of their identity during the Intifada by incorporating banned symbols and the colors of the Palestinian flag into their Tatreez patterns. **Maya Amer**'s work is a recent and urgent expression of Palestinian protest. It is a call for attention to the victims of the Israeli army in the Palestinian territories through a digital embroidery pattern. The crosses represent the number of Palestinian victims in the month of October in 2023.

patricia kaersenhout's work is also a form of cultural decolonisation (wiki: the process of change in a society in which (Western) colonial thought patterns are pushed back). The embroidered fabrics from the Rebellious Pride series are a powerful and active resistance to the prevailing feminist canon of the 1980s that paid no attention to racism and at the same time a celebration of the role of Black pioneering women. The fabrics are an ode to ZMV women such as Alem Desta, Julia da Lima and Mercedes Zandwijken. kaersenhout has also often used embroidery in her performances, both as a form of active resistance and a way to heal wounds together.

3

With the advent of the smartphone and all kinds of other digital tools, new systems of information storage have emerged: iconic languages of emojis such as hearts and smileys. Unlike the ephemerality of our electronic resources and data storage devices, embroidery is an age-old, slow tradition of information visualisation. It turns out to be extremely sustainable because it is still practiced today. The repetition of the stitches, the focus on the counted pattern and the strength of the coloured threads make embroidery a soothing activity that can temper the speed of our current technological age, as the work of Lilly Lulay and Marian Jongsma shows.

For her series Early Digital Tech, Artifacts from The Age of Acceleration, **Lilly Lulay**, like a futuristic archaeologist, collected digital entertainment electronics and storage and transmission media from the past five decades. To create her series, she chose embroidery. This ancient technique of storing and transmitting information serves as an antidote to the mass-produced, rapidly aging technological devices that transmit information, such as floppy disks, CD-ROMs, and cell phones.

Marian Jongsma has a great love for colours. Every day she works from an inner necessity on abstract, rapid drawings and slow embroidery in bright colours that radiate a lot of energy and power. It's a way to survive in the world. Before her brain haemorrhage, she suffered from anxiety that she tried to dampen with alcohol. 'I wanted to live but my fears held me back. I threw the life I wanted to live into colourful embroidery.' After her brain haemorrhage, she feels liberated from that.

Stitch Your Brain by visual artist and physician **Monika Auch** is a solid, research-based plea concerning the intelligence of our hands. The aim is to use data and arguments to demonstrate the importance of the creative process for health and mental stability. It also has a beneficial effect on long- and short-term learning. That is why she wants to promote handicrafts and combat material illiteracy. Embroidered brains, self-portraits of the makers, together form the Amsterdam Brain Collection. Stitch Your Brain encourages slow needlework to counterbalance our highly automated society.



Let Go and Cherish #1

D(R)AAD. About embroidery as protest and resistance is the first small exhibition in the Let Go and Cherish series, which explores how contemporary art can contribute to a new experience of cultural heritage. The series reflects, through current issues and current themes, on objects, stories and themes from the historical exhibition Allemaal Haarlemmers - about 1000 years of city history, and takes an alternative and broader view, beyond the borders of Haarlem and its immediate surroundings.

A viewing guide is available for students.

For more information, visit verweymuseumhaarlem.nl

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