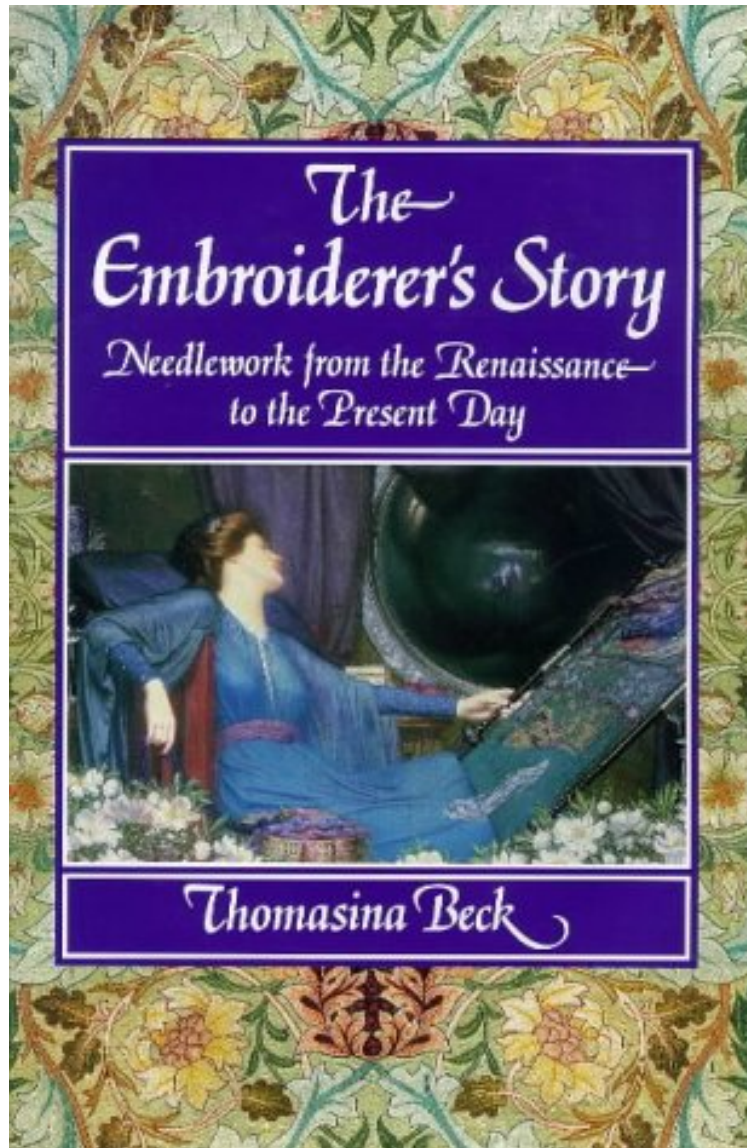


The Embroiderer's Story: Needlework from the Renaissance to the Present Day

Thomasina Beck

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Thomasina Beck : The Embroiderer's Story: Needlework from the Renaissance to the Present Day before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Embroiderer's Story: Needlework from the Renaissance to the Present Day:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Doubly high praise for this bookBy Jane in MilwaukeeThe praise is

doubled because I love needlework, I love history and I love studying the history of needlework. This book goes a giant leap beyond that and presents not just a history of needlework from Renaissance days to now but discusses the embroiderers themselves and how they have been depicted through the centuries. For example, the lady in the cover portrait is looking languidly at her beautiful artistry but there is some anguish in her eyes: the title is "I am Half-Sick of Shadows" by Sidney Meteyard (1913). The chapters follow English history: The Elizabethan Embroiderer, The Stuart Embroiderer, The Georgian Embroiderer, Regency Interlude, The Victorian Embroiderer, The Twentieth-century Embroiderer. I have hundreds of needlework books and dozens of history books on my favorite subject: Tudor England. My 2 all-time favorite historic figures are Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots. On the very first page of the first chapter a gorgeous portrait of Arbella Stuart appears. There is a detailed discussion of how in 1600 this teenager wanted to impress her queen by making an extremely complicated "scarf or head veil of lawn cutwork flourished with silver and silk of sundry colours." Arbella was related to Elizabeth and was also Mary Stuart's niece, her father Charles being Henry Lord Darnley's little brother. Arbella was over the moon when Elizabeth wrote her note, as the author describes as "from one embroiderer to another" that she would be glad to know the technique. On the following page, we are then treated to a full-page color portrait of Elizabeth of about the same year in an exceptionally gorgeously embroidered dress with whispery gauze over puffed blackwork sleeves and a wide skirt fairly sagging with goldwork. In between, Ms. Beck takes the time to show a bw 1605 portrait of a woman whose dress has cutwork, 2 sketches of cutwork patterns from Sibmacher's *Modelbuch* (model book) of 1597 and 9 little detailed diagrams how to do cutwork. Later, you come to the 1598 Jane Bostocke sampler, the oldest stitch-signed and dated sampler in the English language. Then, as throughout the book, what embroidery was done, who was doing it and what they used is lovingly detailed. The inspiration behind doing this "women's work" and the drive to make their pieces the most luxurious and complicated as they could. Whole pages are covered with between 1 and 5 or 6 pictures, mostly in color. It appears that every painting showing anyone doing any needlework in the last 400 years is pictured in this book. I can't find a single page that doesn't have an illustration on it but on many of the pages, the only text is the caption of the illustrations. Thomasina Beck's expertise as an embroiderer and historian are beautifully displayed here. Being on lecture panels at the Victoria Albert Museum in London and having all those magnificent pieces of embroidery to examine and analyze are put to great use in the authorship of this book. I heartily recommend it. 21 of 22 people found the following review helpful. Beautiful illustrations, but hard to follow. By A Customer. Thomasina's book is full of beautiful illustrations, examples, and photos, but it is rather hard to read. There seem to be no clear cut examples or divisions between the different embroidery ages, except the chapters themselves. I have found myself going back and saying, "Now what made the Stuart embroiderers distinctive?" I only wish that there were some sort of summary at the end of each chapter to clarify each 'age,' because there is so much information mentioned in each chapter. There were also items and names mentioned throughout the book that needed further clarification, such as the history of a sweetbag. Where did that come from? As I said before though, it is full of beautiful illustrations and could serve as a helpful guide in designing reproduction patterns. It would also make a good coffee table book. 20 of 22 people found the following review helpful. Like eating chocolate! By A Customer. I only wished for more graphics of her source material. Think this book would interest any needleworker who also loved to read English history (in spite of the title, it's mostly about England). Whenever one looks at history from a unique POV, in this case needlework, one's understanding is deepened. It could also be subtitled: "How rich women wasted time".

Using historical sources, Beck surveys embroiderers and their work from Elizabethan times to the present day. She discusses their sources of inspiration and design, as well as the changing ways in which they used these in dress and furnishings. The book includes sample motifs and stitch layouts.

From Booklist To re-create the lives of accomplished embroiderers about whom little is known, Beck surveys historical writings in the form of diaries, biographies, and novels. From the Renaissance to more recent periods, Beck's research yields a panorama of individual portraits that depict the girls and women responsible for much of the fine needlework pictured: elaborate samplers, bookbindings, ornate tapestries, and garments embellished with exquisite patterns. Profusely illustrated with examples of the art form that has survived throughout centuries, the book includes reproductions of pages from rare tomes and oil paintings depicting interiors and richly detailed clothing. With these images Beck offers an expansive trove of design sources for contemporary embroiderers in a solid and inspiring resource. Alice Joyce