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*Rom8: Gallery for artistic research at Bergen Academy for Art and Design*



## the Stitch project

by Hilde Hauan

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The Stitch Project (TSP) was founded in 2012 by seven artists from Sweden, Iceland, Palestine, Brazil and Norway. The project will last for four years. Our first gathering was at the Sami festival Riddu Riddu<sup>1</sup> in Kåfjorden, in Troms, Northern Norway in July 2012, and we will have the last event in July 2016, at the 25th years celebration of Riddu Riddu. This art project has three main activities, which we invite everyone to join in on. We embroider on a 10-meter long tablecloth, we spin local wool and we dye with plants from the area we visit. We also look into political or cultural issues and invite experts and artists to give a

presentation or lecture for all the people embroidering around the table. People come to sit around the tablecloth and embroider together with us, they learn to spin wool and pick plants for dyeing yarn. A lot of stories are told, a lot of good dialogues appear and sometimes quietness while working together is also pleasant.

*Living with people who differ—racially, ethnically, religiously, or economically— is the most urgent challenge facing civil society today. We tend socially to avoid engaging with people unlike ourselves, and modern politics encourages the politics of the tribe rather than of the city. In this thought-provoking book, Richard Sennett discusses why this has happened and what might be done about it.*

*Sennett contends that cooperation is a craft, and the foundations for*



*skillful cooperation lie in learning to listen well and discuss rather than debate. In Together he explores how people can cooperate online, on street corners, in schools, at work, and in local politics. He traces the evolution of cooperative rituals from medieval times to today, and in situations as diverse as slave communities, socialist groups in Paris, and workers on Wall Street. Divided into three parts, the book addresses the nature of cooperation, why it has become weak, and how it could be strengthened. The author warns that we must learn the craft of cooperation if we are to make our complex society prosper, yet he reassures us that we can do this, for the capacity for cooperation is embedded in human nature.*

***Richard Sennett; Together: The Rituals, Pleasures, and Politics of Cooperation***

At Riddu Riddu in 2012 we invited the founder of the festival, Lene Hansen, to tell the story of the festival, about the philosophy, the political issues and cultural strength this festival has brought to the Sami people along the coast of Northern Norway.

We visited the smallest wool carding factory in Norway, learned about a small-scale

industry and got a lot of wool to spin.

We met local spinners and weavers. They have a long tradition of yarn spinning, using just the natural color from the sheep and weaving very special blankets, "Grene", on the oldest looms known (in Norwegian: oppstadvev)<sup>2</sup>.

During these first two years of TSP we have visited different cultural festivals in Norway, we have been travelling to different cities on the West Bank and Gaza. In Palestine we met artists, locals and Bedouins. The Bedouin women taught us to spin with their wool and in their tradition, we shared the knowledge and joy of spinning. We learned about their lives and how they struggle to survive with the Bedouin way of living in the Middle East, surrounded by heavy political issues.

We met with artists in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron and Haifa. We spent a day with students at the Art Academy in Ramallah. They embroidered on the tablecloth and told about their studies and how it is to live on the West Bank, with the wall between the West Bank and

Jerusalem (and Israel), a city with great importance for the Palestinian people. We met with a women group in Rantis, a small Palestine village surrounded by Israeli settlements. The women in Rantis make their living of embroidery. They shared stories from their lifes with us.

*Art is and should continue to be the expression of freedom, regardless of any commission or commissioner, and irrespective, in particular of any symbolic or monumental expression of power...even though place still determines and is determined by history, art shifts its borders; it experiences reality and designates new places and prospects for another history.*

**Denys Zacharopoulos**<sup>3</sup>

We have been to the RELATE north symposium in Iceland with presentations and an exhibition<sup>4</sup>. We were invited to join the International Theatre festival "Peripheral stories" in Dale, on the west coast of Norway. In June 2013 we opened an exhibition in ROM 8, the gallery at Bergen Academy of Art and Design. The exhibition lasted for

three weeks and created a space for discussions and interest in the stitch project both from colleagues and the public. A lot of people came by to sit and embroider on the cloth and talk with us. We had invited four Palestinian artists to show art works together with two from our own group, in addition to the 10-meter long tablecloth and spinning facilities. These are just a few examples of all the meetings, exhibitions and performances we have joined, been invited to and/or have created ourselves. It has been many more.

*A stitch is a named thing and stitching is a named thing and stitching is an action, like speaking, through which the thing is brought into the space of encounter along the endless chain of manifestation of stitching, whether verbal or material, denotative or connotative.*

**Victoria Mitchell**<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://riddu.no/nb/om-festivalen>

<sup>2</sup> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PD-FASC6ZQ&list=PL8888888888888888](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PD-FASC6ZQ&list=PL8888888888888888)

<sup>3</sup> Denys Zacharopoulos

<sup>4</sup> Relate North

<sup>5</sup> From "Dialog Stitching with Metonymy" by Victoria Mitchell





*Alaa Albaba: Al Amari (painting on photo)*

## TSP- group

**Omayya Salman** (1987) graduated from the International Academy of Art, Palestine two years ago and last year she finished her MA-program in Toulouse. She is questioning the topic of terrorism in her artworks.

**Kiyoshi Yamamoto** (1983) is born in Brazil and lives in Bergen. He works with huge paintings, where he shows and discuss the borderline of paintings, sculpture and textile.

**Marie Skeie** (1980) lives and works in Bergen. She has lived most of her life abroad in Japan, Brazil and other countries. She speaks six languages and in her artwork she use languages and her international experience.

**Margrethe Brekke** (1980) lives and work in Bergen. She works with spinning and art installations were textile is the main focus.

**Hildur Bjarnadottir** (1971) Lives in Island, pt. she is working in Bergen as a fellow at the Norwegian Artistic Research program, lasting 3 years. She works mainly with plant dying in textile expressions and water colours.

**Hilde Hauan Johnsen** (1953) lives in Tromsø and commute to Bergen where she works as professor at KHiB. She works with fiber optics and with sound installations in traditional textile techniques like weaving and sprang.

**Britta Marakatt Labba** (1951) lives in Øvre Sopparo in the North of Sweden she is a textile artist and use embroidery as her main expression in her art works. She embroider the life and history of the Sami people.



# 1990

**1990**

*by Lene Hansen*

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New Year's Eve 1990. Someone's knocking at my door in Manndalen. A small village in a small municipality, Kåfjord, far north in Norway.

Two young men smile brilliantly at me and say enthusiastically: "Do you want to save the world with us?". "Of course," I replied, taken aback but also curious about how it would go away. "We are going to start a Sami youth association here in Kåfjord! That's what really needs right now! "

Three hours later we meet at the inaugural meeting of what will be Gáivuona Sáminuorat / Kåfjord Sami youth. Nine young people between 19 and 25 years

with different interests and motive to engage and very few with organizational experience gathered to discuss the fate of the Sami community in Kåfjord.

Why this focus on the Sami, someone asks, while others willingly explain. Words like rebellion, awareness, sustainable development, lack of history, Norwegianization, coastal Sami culture and identity are swirling in the air.

The mood rises: "We must rock up the village! Create something cool in the district! Take the coastal Saami to light! Honor our grandparents! ". We put in several hours of questions and answers, visions, dreams and ideas about what had been and what was to become. We should engage in politics, culture and the environment, under a Sami umbrella. We should take the

coastal sami out of the doghouse. Convey its past; give it a new content and thus a new future. Shame would become pride. Thus began, what for many of us was, the adventure of the Riddu Riddu festival. Riddu Riddu, "storm on the coast" in Norwegian, is an international indigenous festival held every summer in the small village Manndalen. The festival has its origins in a norwegianised coastal Sami area, where a postcolonial awareness and self-understanding is prominent. The village is situated, in many contexts, far out in the periphery, a great distance from both the Sami and Norwegian center. Sami culture and self-understanding has for years been a privat matter and well hidden. It was something that should not be visible, although language and customs still lived locally among the oldest. The festival's development has come about through openness to Sami, Norwegian and international indigenous culture. This provoked many and had a high level of conflict for many years. Sami culture has evolved along

two axes. On the one hand it's held firmly alongside the traditions and ideas of the original culture. On the other side the population wants modernization and development. This is often a difficult balance because there are no forms of expression and tradition that hold both cultural orientations. Riddu Riddu has, however, been such a place. A place that encourages openness and dialogue about language, culture and identity. A place where ambiguity and clarity can go hand in hand. A place where participants can get to know themselves and others, with art as a tool. Through 24 years, the festival has evolved from being a small local barbecue to become a global meeting place for indigenous peoples and minorities worldwide. The road there was steep and twisting, but the years have shown that dialogue is possible - as long as someone will tell and someone will listen. Such is also The Stich Project. Slowly we are sewing stitches together so that the picture is complete. Not perfect, but a little richer, a little more complete and utter to live with.







Plant dying workshop at Riddu Riddu



The stitch project spent a day embroidering with the Women association in Rantis, Palestine.







Performance at The international theatre festival in Dale



The Stitch Project with workshop in cooperation with Windows from Gaza for contemporary art





GAZA  
HUMANITARIAN  
SOCIETY

SAMRA

GAZA





Action performance at Tromsø international film festival





Performance during the exhibition at Al Mamal Lab, Jerusalem





Public intervention by Omayya Salman at Sommer Melbu, festival for art and philosophy.



## A little less lonely

by Frans Jacobi

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Step step, step your heart up.  
Step step, stitch the holes up.

I am sitting on a train, travelling through a norwegian landscape. The train is going in and out of tunnels, in and out of the earth, like a needle going in and out of fabric. The landscape is a piece of fabric. The train is a needle and my journey is spinning a long and fragile thread behind me.

We are all lost. Deplaced.  
Moving from here to there.  
Limited by walls and borders.  
Cut off from our dear ones.  
Lonely souls on each our long and winding road in various and different directions. Journeys.

Step step, step your heart up.  
Step step, stitch the holes up.

How to connect? How to re-establish meaningfull dialogues? How to ground ourselves? Or rather: Where? Where to meet? Where to look each other in the eyes? Where to hear each others voices? Where

to talk and where to listen?

Of course we can go online and meet there. Of course we can talk at Skype – or at Facebook, at Twitter or at Instagram. All these possibilities exist and for most of us there are accessible. What more do we need? Why is this not enough?

In an interview the italian thinker Franco 'Bifo' Berardi talks about two modes of communication between oneself and the other - the connective and the conjunctive:

Conjunction is any kind of relation between linguistic beings – human beings as linguistic creators; relations that don't have any kind of predetermined, prestructured form, except the body sensitive, sensible format of language. A conjunctive relation is a relation between round bodies that don't have a point of perfect interaction.

Connective is totally different. Connection means the exchange of messages and the production of meaning in a media or communication field where you

have pre-formatted machines.  
Segments of interaction.

Connective communication is pre-designed. It takes place in pre-designed formats and only works if we accept the conditions of these pre-designs. In social media we are forging our identities to fit the pre-designs of corporate globalism. We are shaping our identities anew. We are coming together, not as one, but as similar. We are shaping up, we mainstreaming ourselves. We are part of a whole, but only as similar.

Step step, step your heart up.  
Step step, stitch the holes up.

Conjunctive communication is not pre-designed. Its not corporate. Conjunctive communication is grounded in our bodies. In the imperfection and difference of each of our singular bodies. It is grounded in where we are. Physical. Its limited by where we are. Its between you and me, but we have to meet to make it work. I have to see your face. I have understand your body language to make up for the parts of your language I

don't understand. I have to hear your voice. Conjunctive communication is you and me. Here. Sharing space and time. Now.

I'm all lost in the supermarket, I can no longer shop happily  
I came in here for the special offer, a guaranteed personality  
And it's not here, it disappear  
I'm all lost in the supermarket, I can no longer shop happily

The Stitch Project is an attempt at a place to meet. It crosses borders and cultures. It is making us meet. Even though we are separated - separated by geography, separated by politics, separated by borders - we can meet. Our round imperfect bodies can meet and we can talk. We can eat and we can work together.

Embroidery, weaving, spinning.  
Extracts of plants becoming color. Local plants, local colors. Food. Cooking. Local food. Exotic food. These are all simple tools. Tools are meant to produce. A result, a production, an item. But here the tools are used differently. Here they are tools to make us meet. By using the tools we are showing each other who we are. Where we come



from. What we like.

And we talk. And we tell. Stories from here. Stories from there. A lot of stories.

These tools are traditional. They stem from a time when things were connected. The hand was connected to the body. Work was a bodily action. Work was connected to materials and materials sprung directly from the surroundings. From the place we were living. Food was an expression of our dialogue with the place we were living. We were rooted. We were stable identities, working with our hands. Working with materials and things that expressed our belonging.

Now we are moving. Moving around. Not belonging, but longing. Longing for the past. Longing for home. Longing for each other. Longing for ourselves.

Step step, step your heart up.  
Step step, stitch the holes up.

The Stitch Project tools are also metaphors. Metaphors for our meeting. The long spun thread

running from the north of Norway to the Middle East is a metaphor for the long journey that the project has undertaken, for the long narrative that we have woven together. In the fabric each of us has stitched our small stories, our images and symbols and these fragments of narrative, looks like a large collective story. It is not a story, it doesn't add up – but it doesn't matter. What matters is that its a metaphor for the possibility of such a story.

The thread doesn't connect the lost nation of the Sami with the lost nation of the Palestine. But it suggest that in spite of all the borders and displacements we can meet. In physical, direct conversation. In conjunction. The thread makes this possible on a metaphorical level, and the collective efforts of the Stitch Project People makes it possible in the real world. If only for a short while we met and our meeting is recorded, memorized as stitch. The hole is stitched up. They leave again, and we are left.

And we are left: A little less lonely.



The stitch project visited Bedouin camp at the desert close to Hebron. We shared knowledge about wool and spinning with the women.



The Stitch Project with workshop in cooperation with Windows from Gaza for contemporary art





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The Stitch Project with workshop in cooperation with Windows from Gaza for contemporary art







Spinning workshop at Sommer Melbu



Artwork by Kiyoshi Yamamoto at  
Sommer Melbu, festival for art  
and philosophy



# Tenging norður Relate North

8. - 24. nóvember 2013

## **The Stitch Project in Iceland fall 2013: The Role of the Arts in a Time of Change**

*Ásthildur Jónsdóttir assistant  
professor at the Iceland Academy  
of the Arts*

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In late fall 2013 the Stitch Project participated in the exhibition 'Relate North' in Iceland. This was the second exhibit of the University of the Arctic's thematic network Arctic Sustain-

able Arts and Design (ASAD). The fundamental aim for the exhibition, and the seminar that followed it, was to create a platform for safeguard of the cultural diversity in the North and to support the local social and environmental development of local communities through examining the potential means of art and art education for changing values. This exhibition is about the visitors and for them. It shows that the world is big and everyone should have a place in it. As

you walk through the exhibit and read the artist statements, you see works that touch upon ecological, environmental and philosophical themes connected to sustainability. The works deal with who we are, the world that surrounds us and how we act. (Jónsdóttir, 2013b)

The exhibition aimed to help guests to deepen their understanding of its topic. It raised the question of what we can do to find a balance between our complex ecology and well-being. In these critical times the move towards the goal of sustainability requires fundamental changes in human attitudes and activity. It can be seen as the struggle for a balance between the good life and the integrity of nature, resulting in human actions often coming into conflict with nature and crossing the earth's environmental limits as a result of an overemphasis on the good life (Háskóli Íslands, 2012; Hattingh, n.d.; Jónsdóttir, 2013a; Sampford, 2010). "Increasingly, people believe that the integrity of the earth itself is under threat – a belief that is fuelled by disturbing images and reports from outer space" (Tuan, 2004, p. 15). The Bonn declaration (2009)

stated:

The challenges arise from values that have created unsustainable societies... We need a shared commitment to education that empowers people for change. Such education should be of a quality that provides the values, knowledge, skills and competencies for sustainable living and participation in society.

These challenges call for all of us to rethink our value framework and incorporate new approaches to what we consider a good life. The exhibition and the collaboration in the ASAD network is part of that process. We all need to strive to create change and work towards a future focusing on well-being in balance with the earth's carrying capacity.

The stitch project and sustainability

Artists, whichever media they use, create works that are in close harmony with their social context and influenced by the present (Barrett, 2011). It is interesting to reflect on this connection between artists and the content of their work and ask how one can gain knowledge about important issues relat-

ed to sustainability by viewing works of art. One could do it in three ways:

Promoting ecological use of materials.

Maintaining and developing existing technology and knowledge of issues in visual arts.

Working with content that increases understanding of issues relating to sustainable development (Jónsdóttir 2011).

One can connect the Stitch Project to all of those means. It is possible to connect the project to all those factors.

1. The group responsible for that set up the project in Iceland set up a workshop station where they made thread from Icelandic wool. During the exhibition opening the visitors could observe how rock and cassettes are used to create a thread.
2. The Nordic countries have an extensive textile tradition. The work has the potential to strengthen the knowledge of stitch work by sharing knowledge with others.
3. Since textile is a social metaphor, the setting in the Nordic house with the tablecloth laid out on an eight-meter long table with chairs all around it, opens the door for dialogue. The project is intended as a meeting

place filled with dialogue, stories, knowledge and inspiration. The fact that this cloth had travelled all the way from Gaza, Tromsø, Jerusalem, Bergen, Ramallah, Dale, Rantis, Kåfjord, Oslo to Iceland gives it yet another dimension. There is rich potential for interesting dialogues among the participants when they participate in traditions, political- social- and cultural issues that connect us all as world citizens. This approach is in line with the key issues of sustainability: we need to learn to maintain the good life without diminishing the quality of life for others, and depleting natural resources. We must protect these resources for our own and future generations (UN documents, n.d.). Sustainability calls for integrated systemic thinking highlighting the understanding that in sustainability we are all working within a web of interdependent ecological and social systems (Sterling, 2004; McKenzie, 2008). It can dissolve barriers between different groups, theory and praxis, as well as between all disciplines. Some of the works exhibited at the Nordic house had participation ele-

ments, which may be associated with this important point. Participation has become more important and central to contemporary art. This phenomenon goes by many names such as: participative art, collaborative art, socially engaged art, relational aesthetics and creative process art. Some works of art like the 'Stitch project' involve the community. They tend to deal with social issues that are closely related to the values that form the basis of sustainability. The Stitch Project is able to show in one piece a very complex issue. Community-based art is any art created with the purpose of engaging a particular community into a larger dialogue with the purpose of generating positive change.

One week after the exhibition opened I organized a seminar about sustainability in the Nordic house, for Icelandic art teachers. Around sixty teachers participated. Seven practicing art teachers gave presentations about their approach to education for sustainability. After the presentation the whole group came into the exhibition space and gathered around the stitch

project. The participants became very active in the round table discussion and mentioned how working together opened up the dialogue.

One of art teacher who visited the exhibition highlighted the importance of how the possibilities of having different people of all ages join in. This teacher hoped to develop a project in the Icelandic countryside inspired by this idea.

Everyone agreed to the need to find more and better ways to learn from and understand each other. Examples of disrupted and vested interests were mentioned, and the importance of creating circumstances that allowed more space for the imagination to foster more sustainable ways of living.

The Stitch Project and educational potentials

When teaching in a school one could say that an art-class is a community of people. The same can be said of people who happen to live together in the same neighbourhood, same city, same town: They come from different families who have their own ideologies, tastes and values even though Iceland is fairly mono

cultural. Participating with the group in an exhibition like this highlights the differences. It is my role to discover how those differences lead to something productive

The Stitch Project provides possibilities for collaboration when working alone or together. People had the opportunity to come together and take part in creating the cloth. That helps participants to develop their social capital by cooperating, sharing, and seeking and finding shared ideas and values. But just as importantly, the work is very individual. You could come alone to the exhibition space and work on the cloth. Even though the work is a part of a collaborative process people could participate in the work in solitude. That way the work focuses on the importance of each person has. This could work as a metaphor for looking at the impact we have as humans both on the ecosystem and on a society's culture. The Stitch Project can be seen as a metaphor for the importance of human unity in modern existence.

It can be argued that a cultural project like the Stitch Project is not simply a luxury but that it

can play a fundamental role for citizens in understanding their own local settings. The tablecloth creates opportunities for political expression, community dialogue and shared cultural experiences. It has the capacity to trigger reflection, generate empathy, create dialogue and foster new ideas and relationships by offering a powerful and democratic way of expressing, sharing and shaping values.

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Performance at Relate North exhibition at Nordic House, Reykjavik





## "Palestine Heritage: Tool for Cultural Exchange"

*By: Dr. Adel H. Yahya.  
Director of the Palestinian Association for Cultural Exchange (PACE)*

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The Heritage of Palestine is for the most part a world heritage even if most of its world renowned historical, religious and archaeological sites are not recognized as such, neglected and abandoned as a result of the current political situation. The country has a long tradition as a tourist destination, and its people have a long tradition of

openness to, and tolerance of foreign cultures and influences. Palestine, or the Holy Land, as many call it, is in fact the birth place of tourism in the form of pilgrimage. During the fourth century AD people started coming to the country as pilgrims to visit the Christian Holy places such as the birth place of Jesus (Bethlehem) and his burial site (Jerusalem), and to walk in the footsteps of the Holy Family. This role was further illustrated with the advent of Islam and the influx of Moslem pilgrims to Jerusalem from the eighth century on. Palestine is also the cradle of civilisation, and the land where the three great monotheistic religions of mankind; Islam, Christianity and Judaism blossomed. The Palestinians have always had very high expectations from this human activity (tourism). Most of them view it as an important human activity that brings significant economic benefits and at the same time exposure

to other cultures and various ways of life. The importance of cultural exchange may be hard to quantify but it broadens the perspectives of visitors and locals alike, and for most Palestinians it better lives. Interrupting tourism for one reason or another can have a devastating impact on many in the country and the country as a whole. Palestine is a narrow bridge of land between two massive continents; Africa and Asia. This location has dominated the country's history from time immemorial. People from east and west, south and north have moved back and forth across the country. This small piece of land has been involved in almost every important event in the region's history, and the world at large. It has been influenced by many civilisations and cultures, from Pharonic Egypt down to the Moslem and Christian Arabs and the Israeli Jews of today. The Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans have all had an impact and influence on the character of today's Palestine. Ruins of Canaanite and Roman temples, Byzantine monasteries and churches, and Moslem mosques and minarets stand witness to this rich heritage. Regrettably, Palestine's turbulent recent past has had a detrimental, if not fatal impact on the country's image and thus on the once flourishing tourist industry. Palestinians

have been denied the right to present themselves to the world and to promote their own country and heritage. Their image of the country and its indigenous people has, in fact, been stained by decades of conflict and negative propaganda, especially since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and more particularly since the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967. Due to the decline of the tourism sector world famous historical, religious and environmental tourist attractions in the Palestinian areas lack the sort of facilities one would find in other countries in the region and the world. World renown sites which would normally qualify as world heritage sites lack the necessary regulations and laws to protect and to promote them locally and internationally. Aside from the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and to a lesser extent, the city of Jericho, all other Palestinian cities and localities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are rarely visited by foreign tourists. Tourists refrain from visiting the Palestinian areas due to concerns about safety, but also as a result of ignorance of the potentials of the country. Most, if not all Palestinians are eager, however, to promote the image of their country as a significant tourist destination. Despite some shortcomings, they briefly succeeded in doing so after the

establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1996, but this was only a short lived episode which came to an abrupt end upon the breakout of al-Aqsa Intifada in Oct. 2000.

Palestinian Embroidery: One form of Palestinian Culture For hundreds, if not thousands of years, the people of Palestinians have had a long standing tradition in producing a wide range of handicrafts. Many of those continued into the present day as a result of tourism and international interest in the country. Palestinian handicrafts include pottery making, ceramics, soap making, glass blowing, olive wood, Mother of Pearl carvings, and above all embroidery which is a wide spread Palestinian women artistic tradition. Palestinian embroidery is very beautiful and of very high quality. Diverse motifs are to be found in Palestinian embroidery and costume due to Palestine's long history and position on the international trade routes which exposed it to multiple influences. The tradition of embroidering in locally-distinctive styles was at its height during the Ottoman rule of Palestine. Foreign travelers to Palestine in the 19th. and early 20th. centuries often referred to the rich variety of costumes among Palestinian women.

Until recently, a woman's economic status, her marital status, and the area she comes from could be

determined from the type of dress "thoub" she wears. That depends usually on the type of cloth, colors of cloth and threads, the way the dress is cut, and embroidery motifs, or lack thereof .. etc.

Although we have no clear evidence from ancient Palestine, patterns of traditional Palestinian women dresses bear strong resemblance to the costumes of West Asia as shown in ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian art. The ex-director of the Oriental Institute Museum Mr. Geoff Emberling noted that "Palestinian clothing from the 19th. - 20th. centuries shows traces of similar styles of clothing represented in eastern art 3,000 years ago". Others like Ms. Hanan Munayyer, collector and researcher of Palestinian clothing sees resemblance between modern Palestinian costumes and that of the Canaanites (1500 BC). Traditional motifs derived mainly from basic geometric forms like squares, circles, and triangles as well as local plants, flowers and birds. The chest panel usually gets the largest and most beautiful blocks of embroidery, probably to direct the attention to the important chest area. Longstanding traditions of embroidery are to be found today in the mountainous region of Palestine, especially the Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Bethlehem areas, as well as upper and lower Galilee, and the Ne-



gev. There is little embroidery in the coastal area from Haifa in the north to Jaffa in the south, the Jordan Valley, and from Nablus northwards. This is probably due to the fact that embroidery is coupled with the lack of work shortages and unemployment, especially amongst women. The areas described above with no tradition in embroidery are usually highly productive agricultural areas, and thus relatively richer than the mountain region in the centre, and the desert in the south.

In the late 1930s, new influences were introduced to Palestinian embroidery by European pattern books and magazines. This influence promoted the appearance of curvilinear motifs, like flowers, vines or leaf arrangements, and introduced the paired bird motif which became very popular in central Palestinian regions. The purpose of embroidery has changed greatly in recent decades. Political unrest in the region has pushed many women into the position of providers for their families. Some women are widowed, while others have husbands that are unable to find work because of the separation wall and the many restrictions on movement in the area. Many women who are skilled embroiderers began to work to embroider for the market despite the many challenges. New embroidery styles such as scarves (shawls), women purses, and wall

hangings began to appear in the late 1960's especially in the refugee camps of the West Bank. Individual village styles were lost and replaced by a distinct Palestinian style. Women would normally begin embroidering as young girls at the age of seven. The skill is usually passed to them from their mothers and grandmothers. Before the 20th. century, most young girls didn't attend school, and thus spent much of their time preparing their clothes and especially their costumes for ceremonial purposes, particularly their wedding dresses. Items produced included besides the embroidered dresses, veils, headdresses, undergarments, kerchiefs, belts and even footwear.



Jordan



Collecting *Xanthoria parietina* at the sea side in Melbu for plant dying

العظمة  
في هذه الحياة  
ليست في التعثر  
و لكن في القيام  
بعد كل مرة تتعثر  
عليها



**Our greatest  
glory is  
not in never  
falling,  
but in rising  
every time  
we fall.**

*This publication is supported by:*



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