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The Fabric of Protest

May 2021



A monthly textile workshop by People's History Museum (PHM) and artist Helen Mather. Learn new techniques and discuss the issues that matter to you.

This resource introduces some of the ideas and techniques that will be explored during the online workshop on Saturday 29 May 2021. Use it to prepare for the workshop or as inspiration for your own textile projects.

Recommended for 11+ (under 18s must have an accompanying adult present during the session).

#FabricOfProtest **phm.org.uk**

The More in Common project and exhibition are part of CultureLabs, receiving funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.



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RECIPES FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

More in Common project



Inspired by the legacy of Jo Cox MP, PHM's More in Common project involves a group of over 30 people from different backgrounds who made Manchester their home, coming together to share knowledge, experiences, and conversations.

Co-created by the project group, the exhibition More in Common: in memory of Jo Cox explores Jo's life and legacy and follows the group on their journey in celebrating our commonality and challenging discrimination. Inspired by Jo's words, 'We are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us'.

Find out more

Use the links below to find out more about PHM's More in Common project and More in Common from the Jo Cox Foundation.

PHM More in Common project

<https://phm.org.uk/exhibitions/more-in-common-in-memory-of-jo-cox/>

More in Common from Jo Cox Foundation

<https://www.jocoxfoundation.org>

Inspiration

In this and upcoming workshops, we will look at clothing and identity, inspired by the costumes created for the 'Threads That Bind Us' display in the More in Common: in memory of Jo Cox exhibition.

The costumes were created by four artists who, as part of PHM's More in Common project, explore the past, present and future through the eyes of Manchester's diverse population, and its roots in colonialism through the cotton trade and fashion industries.



The group shared these words about their work:

'Gathering inspiration from the heritage found in our cultural clothing and our hopes for the future as a gathered people, the costumes take us on a journey through the negative effects of colonialism, coming together as a diverse people from all over the world, growing, learning and launching into a colourful new future as a unified people.'

Inspiration

This month we will focus on Celebration! by Mei Yuk Wong (2021) a flamboyant headpiece celebrating the amazing diversity of our communities and the wider world.

The headpiece is created from rainbow coloured feathers, with a floor length rainbow coloured organza trail. The trail is embellished with a colourful range of handmade fabric flowers, cylindrical fabric shapes and beads. The word 'DIVERSITY' is beaded near the top of the trail.



Mei Yuk shares these words about the work:

'We are different and yet we share the same humanity.'

Why should we just be content with one culture when we can enjoy a variety?

We are here to celebrate our diversity and it is for all to enjoy.'

Celebration! by Mei Yuk Wong, 2021

Identity symbols

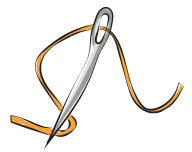
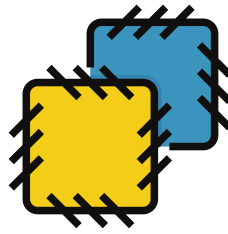


In this month's workshop we will be taking inspiration from Mei Yuk's headpiece, which celebrates diversity through the use of materials and colour.



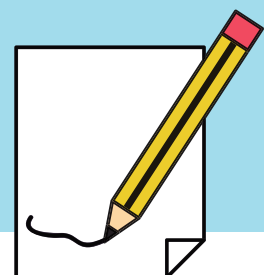
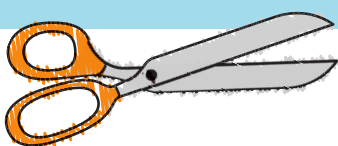
We will be making symbols or motifs with fabric that relate to parts of our identity.

Materials



Gather some materials from around your home.
You will need:

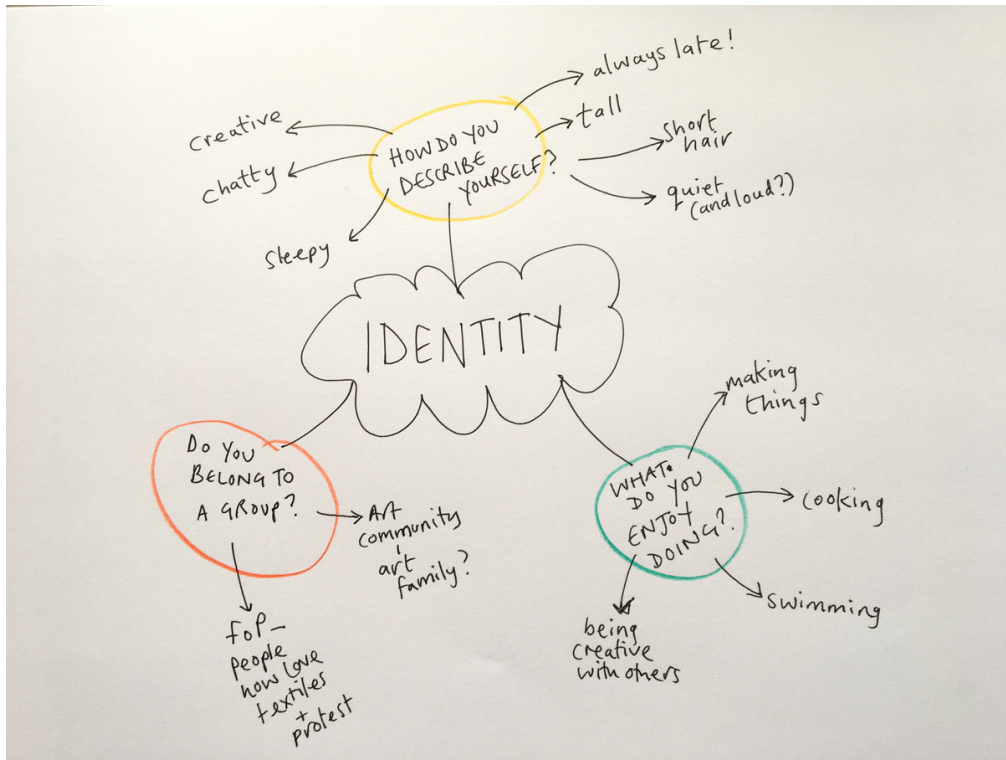
- Paper and pen
- Fabric – piece around 30 x 30cm or equivalent (doesn't have to be square)
- Fabric scraps
- Embroidery thread
- Needle and pins
- Scissors
- Pen or pencil for marking on the fabric





How do you represent your identity?

1



Think about your identity and the elements that make up what it is to be you. This can be a big subject and difficult to pin down, so ask yourself a few questions as prompts:

- How do you describe yourself? This could be through physical descriptions, characteristics or personality.
- What do you enjoy doing? Is it a hobby, an everyday activity, social or individual?
- Do you belong to a group? Is this part of your identity? Groups could be fan clubs, activities, faith groups, meetings of like minded people.

Jot down some of these ideas, maybe you have thought of some more questions or elements of your identity. Make some notes on a piece of paper.

Choosing symbols

Think about symbols that you could use to communicate these ideas. To do this, you might want to think of objects or materials that help to visualise your symbols.

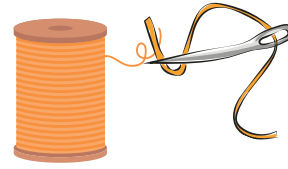
2



This could be simple things like kitchen implements for cooking, tools for making, clocks for timekeeping; or it could be an object that you have that represents something to you, something precious or something you encounter every day.

You could also think about materials, things like plants, wood, feathers, buttons, yarn. Is there something that you feel holds some meaning to you in relation to your identity? This might be obvious or it might be a hidden meaning.

Design your piece

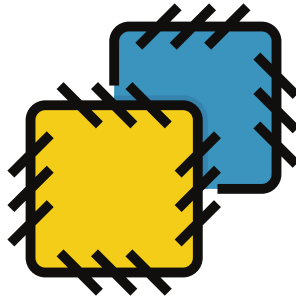


3

Draw out some of these symbols or collect some of these materials to bring the ideas together.

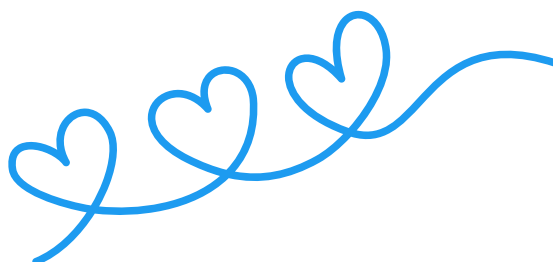
Choose a few symbols to put onto your fabric, you can do this using appliqué or embroidery (or both), whatever suits your symbol.

You can add bits of material too if you have chosen some.



You can use different stitches to attach the symbols to your fabric, depending on the shape of your symbol or the materials you are using.

On the next few pages there are examples of some of the stitches you could try.



Stitching: over stitch

4 Use an over stitch to appliqué your fabric symbols onto your backing fabric:

a.



b.



c.



d.



Stitching: couching stitch

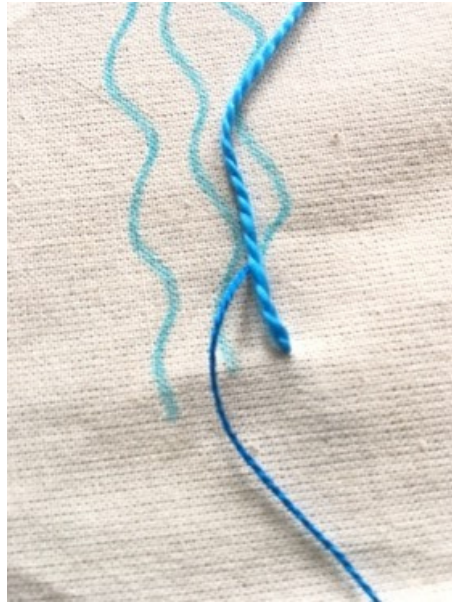
5

Use a couching stitch for drawn lines and curves.

a.



b.



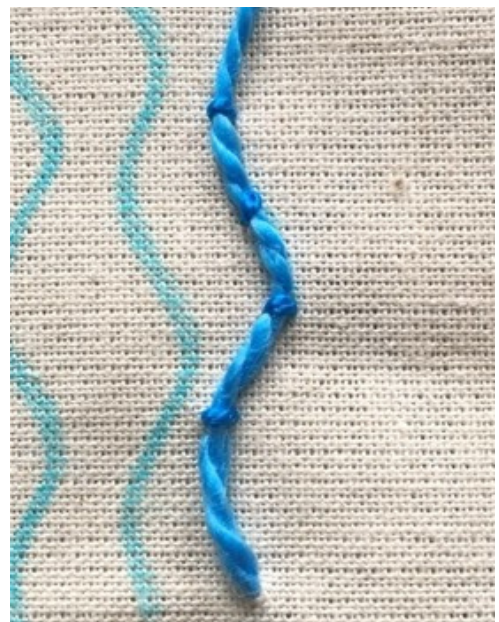
c.



d.



e.



Stitching: running stitch

6 Try stitching down any materials you might want to use with long running stitches.

a.



b.



We will use the symbols that we have stitched this month again in the next workshop in June, where we will look at patterns inspired by the ideas in the 'Threads That Bind Us' work.

You might like to check out:



Artist Nick Cave makes Soundsuits that explore identity and challenge assumptions.

- [link to National Gallery of Canada website](#)
- [link to the Guardian article.](#)

Shelia Paine is a traveller and world expert on textiles and tribal societies. Shelia writes about textile traditions, techniques and imagery.

- [link to Shelia Paine's Facebook.](#)
- [link to Fabric Thread website](#)

Join us on Zoom to get creative

If you would like to join artist Helen Mather and others to stitch, chat and share ideas inspired by this resource, [book onto the online Zoom workshop.](#)

Don't forget to bring a cuppa!

This month we'll be online on **Saturday 29 May 2021,**
2.00pm - 3.30pm.



Share what you have created!

We would love to see what you have created!

If you use social media, please share photos of your creations using #FabricOfProtest.



Or if you prefer you can email a photo of your creation to learning@phm.org.uk.



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