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The Fabric of Protest

June 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 26 June 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.

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](#)
- [More in Common from Jo Cox Foundation](#)
- [Access the More in Common: in memory of Jo Cox exhibition online](#)

Threads That Bind Us



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. This display has been created by a group of four artists with the support of artist Ibukun Baldwin.

The costumes were created as part of PHM's More in Common project, they 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'll be taking inspiration from 'For Whose Common Wealth?' by Chandanpreet Shergill, 2021. Chandanpreet shares these words about the work:

'For this piece, I used patchwork to symbolise the complex and shifting relationship of an identity that lies between two countries and cultures. The bright colours, patterns and embellishments celebrate my Indian heritage, and the patches show the friction of the ties between the commonwealth countries and Britain's colonial past. It is both looking back to empire and the textile industry of Manchester, as well as forward to a more hopeful and sustainable fashion future'.



For Whose Common Wealth? created by Chandanpreet Shergill, 2021

The garment is made from a patchwork of colourful patterned materials with an organza underskirt that lifts out the bottom of the skirt. Brightly coloured pom poms are attached to the waistband, small gold leaves attached to the bottom trim of the skirt and the words 'COMMON WEALTH', money symbols and the Indian flag are attached in the front central patch.

Symbolic patchworks



In this month's workshop we will take inspiration from Chandanpreet's use of patchwork and pattern to symbolise identities and cultures. We will be using the Japanese boro technique to make a patchwork with scraps of fabric, reflecting cultural connections and the different parts of our identity that patch together to make us who we are.

Almost all cultures have a tradition of patchwork, that have symbolic meaning and often are used in ceremonial rituals.

Boro refers to the practice of repairing textiles through piecing, patching and stitching. It is derived from the term 'boroboro' which means something tattered or repaired in Japanese.



The boro technique was developed before the introduction of cotton, when clothing was made from hemp which wore more easily, so clothing was patched where it was worn to make it stronger and more durable.

Patches were stitched using Sashiko stitches, running stitches through the layers of fabrics. The cloth would be patched over years and family generations, with the patches making a new fabric over time, filled with the touch, wear, and fabric of family.

Further information on Boro textiles:

- [Japanese boro textiles tell histories of labour and love through patchwork](#)
- ['Boro Textiles: Sustainable Aesthetics' exhibition at the Japan Society in New York, 2020](#)

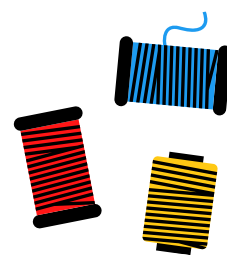
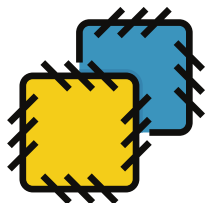
Prepare



If you have time before the session you could think about the colours, patterns, textures and types of materials that reflect elements of your identity and cultural connections.



Materials



Gather some materials from around your home.

You will need:

- Fabric scraps
- Base fabric (This example piece about 13cm x 20cm)
- Needle
- Pins
- Embroidery thread
- Scissors

Creating your piece



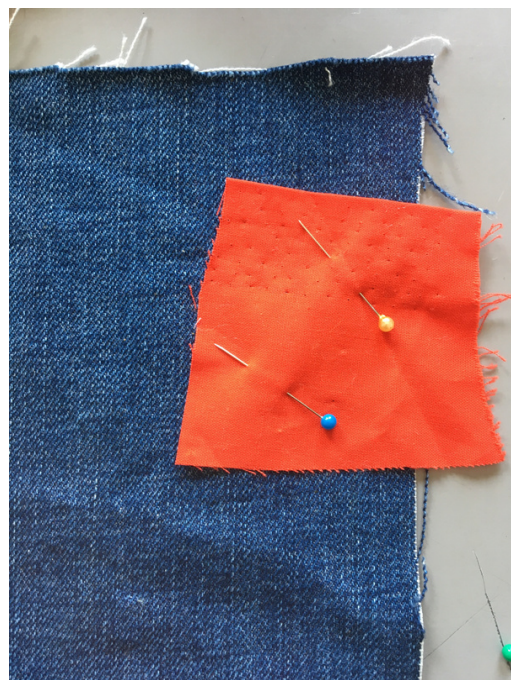
1 Start with the base fabric, pin patches on top in whatever pattern or shape you like.

The patches can be uniform or random and overlap as they go.

a.



b.



c.



d.



Stitching: running stitch

2 When your patches are pinned in place, decide which direction you would like your running stitches to go. This could be vertical, horizontal, diagonal or even circular.

To start your running stitch, take your threaded needle and pull it up from the back to the front. Push your needle into all the layers of fabric and back out a stitch length away. These stitches are around 0.5cm.

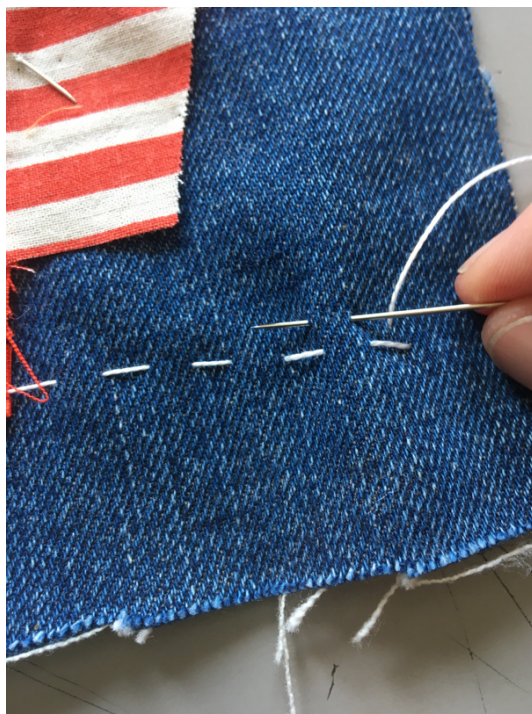


Continue your line of stitching through all the layers to the edge of the fabric.



3

When you have reached the edge, turn your fabric around and continue your running stitch back, next to the last line of stitches.



4

Keep stitching across the fabric until all your fabric is attached to the base and has become a fabric in itself.

a.



b.



c.



d.



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 26 June 2021,**
2.00pm - 3.30pm.



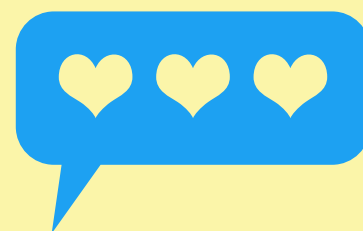
Share what you have created!

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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