THE
FABRIC
OF
PROTEST

People's History Museum

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March 2021

Transparency in the fashion and garment industry

Online

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 session on Saturday 27 March 2021.

Use it to prepare for the session or as inspiration for your own textile projects.

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

#fabricofprotest   phm.org.uk

Inspiration

Colchester Anti-Apartheid Banner, after 1960 © People's History Museum

This month we will be taking inspiration from the materials used in this Colchester Anti-Apartheid Group banner, after 1960 from the museum's 2020 - 2021 Banner Exhibition.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement campaigned for a boycott of apartheid in South Africa and supported those struggling against it. Founded in 1959 as the Boycott Movement, the Anti-Apartheid Movement grew into the biggest ever British pressure group on an international issue.

From 1970 the National Union of Students (NUS) worked closely with the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Students all over Britain joined the anti-apartheid campaigns.

The United Nations supported black South African students to come and study at the University of Essex in the 1980s.

This banner has been decorated with heavy weight, iron on Vilene interfacing. This material is used to strengthen fabric in garment production but it is unseen, because it is placed between layers of fabric.

The textile piece we create will highlight the lack of transparency in the garment industry by using techniques that are usually hidden in garments.
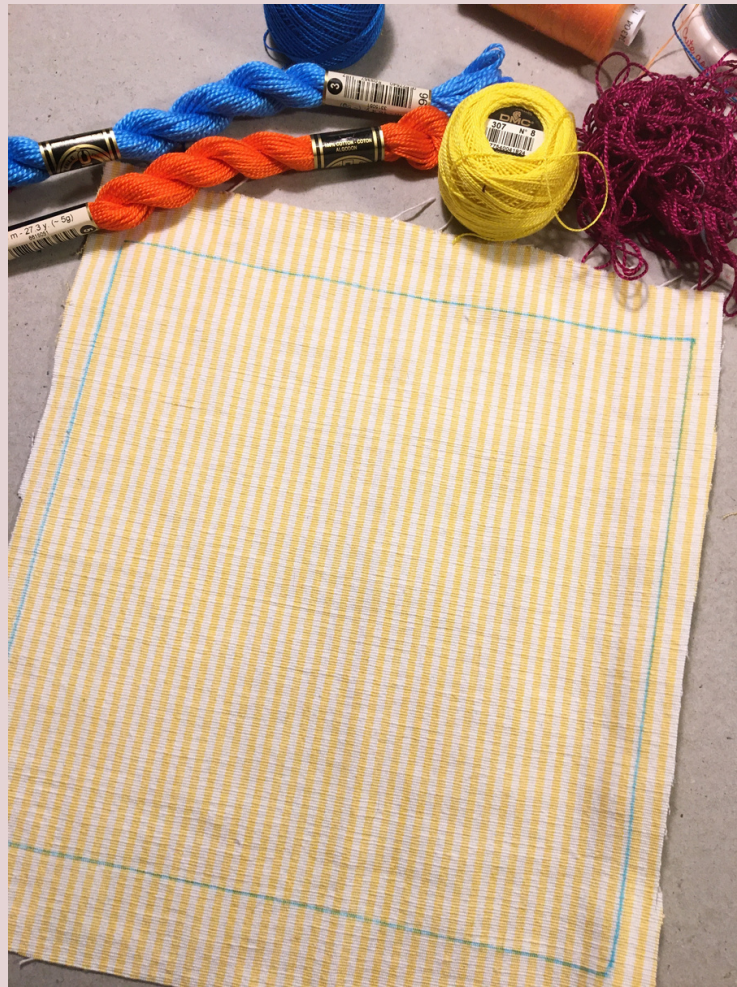
Transparency
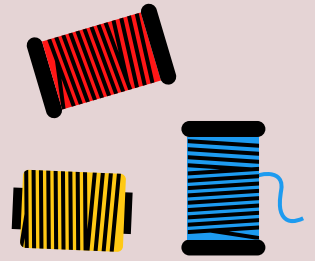
We will be collectively spelling out the word TRANSPARENCY in the workshop, with each person creating a letter. These instructions will show you how to stitch a letter that will be turned over and shown from the 'back'.

We will be using techniques that we have used over recent sessions, such as reverse appliqué, patchwork with old clothes and darning. We we will also use the back of stitches.

These techniques highlight the hidden and unseen nature of garment workers in the fashion industry, raising the visibility of the issues they face.
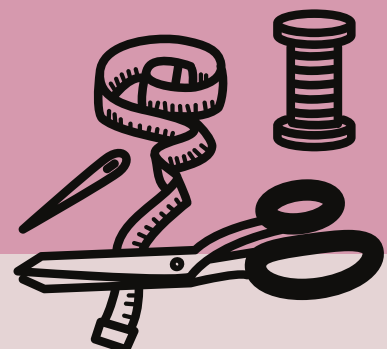
Materials

▼

Gather some materials from around your home.
Here are some suggestions:

- Fabric: 20cm x 20cm
- Thread: embroidery thread/sewing thread
- Needles
- Scissors
- Pen, paper and ruler

Transparency in the fashion and garment industry

There are campaigns for more transparency in the garment and textile industries. People are asking brands to share information about their supply chains including the wages workers receive; the working conditions; and the health and safety and environmental impacts of producing their products.

This is something that campaigns supporting garment workers are asking brands to commit to.

If you have time before the session you could use the links below to find out more about why transparency is important and some of the campaigns calling for brands to be accountable.

Fixing fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability
https://bit.ly/38FNO1G

#GoTransparent campaign
https://cleanclothes.org/campaigns

Why transparency is important by Kalpona Akter
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5KZijLKTJ0

Transparency – what you know you can change
https://labourbehindthelabel.org/campaigns/transparency/

Good news for visibility of homeworkers
https://bit.ly/3rP5IGK

You may want to start sketching, if that helps you develop your thoughts about these issues.
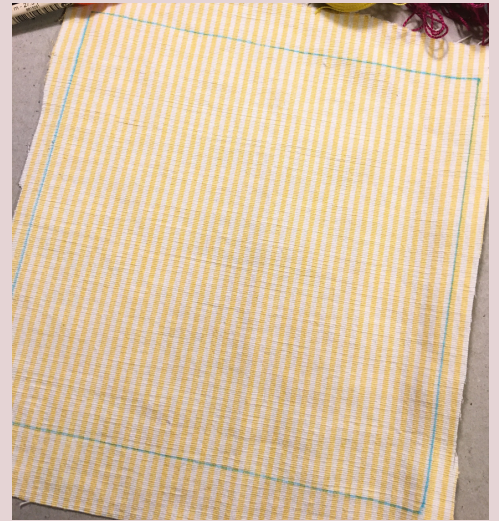
Getting started

1 Gather your materials as listed on page 3.

Mark out (with pins or marker) a square 20cm x 20cm on a piece of fabric.

Don't cut it out until you have finished the piece, otherwise it may fray.

2 When you have been assigned a letter, draw this on a piece of paper to fit the square and cut it out.

Remember to leave at least 1cm around the inside edge of your square which we will use to stitch the squares together.
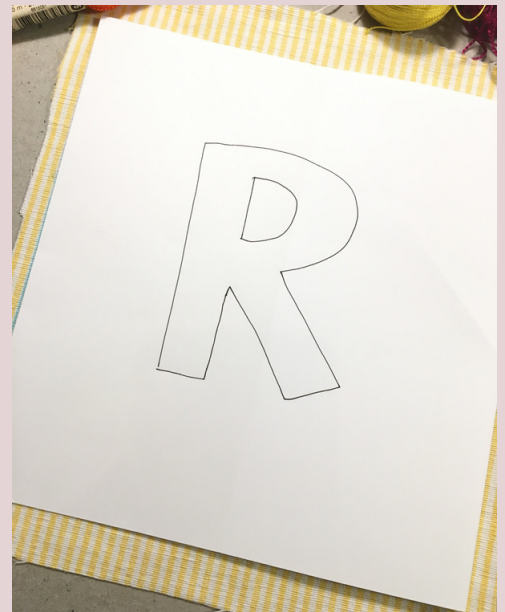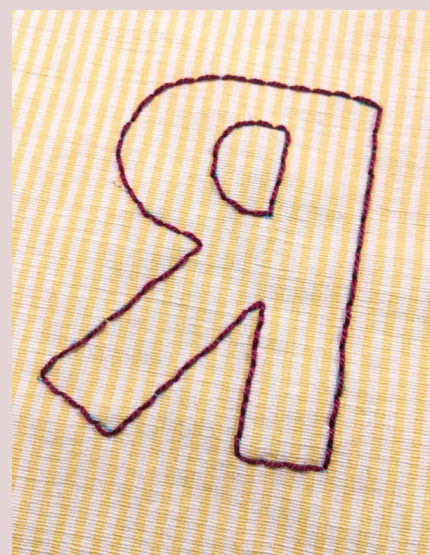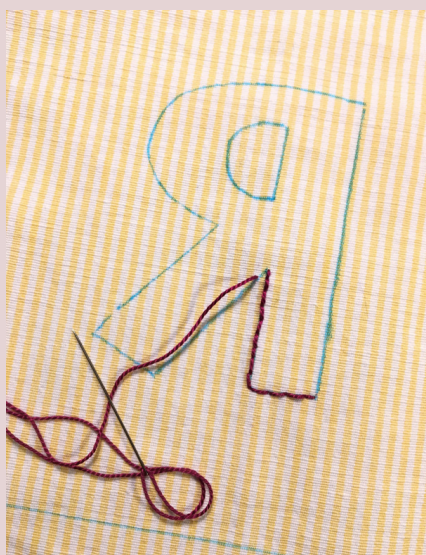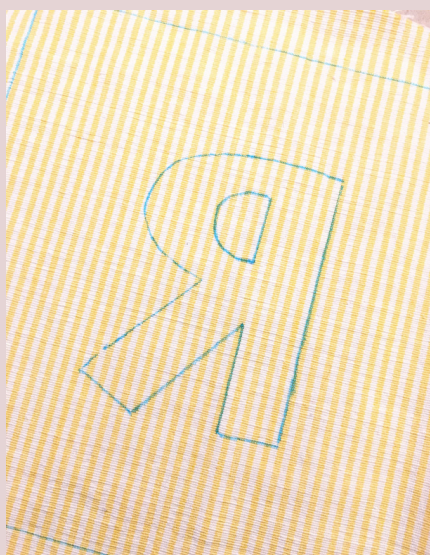
3

The paper letter is your template.

Turn it over to reverse the letter, placing it on the 'back' of your fabric.

You will be working from the back of the fabric.

4 Draw around your letter.

Stitch around the letter using backstitch or running stitch, to provide definition.

5 You can fill the letter with as many decorative stitches as you would like!

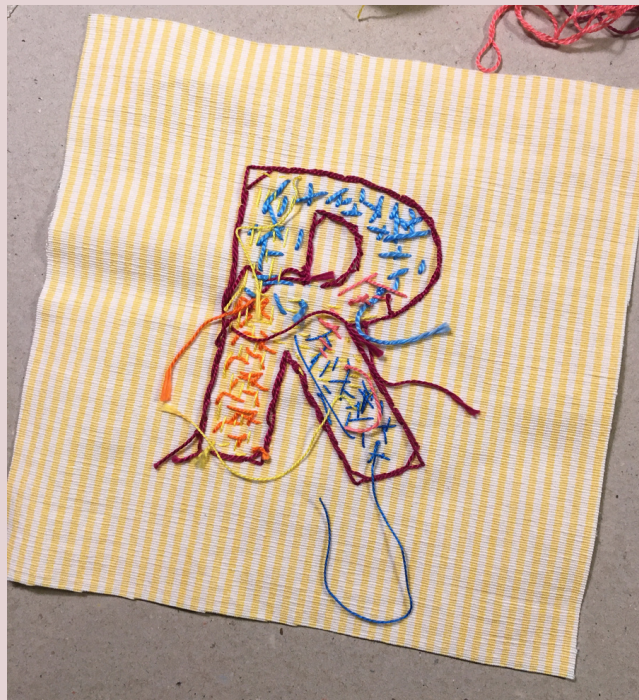Using running stitch to create lines, stitched crosses or scattered stitches. Play with random or planned stitches.
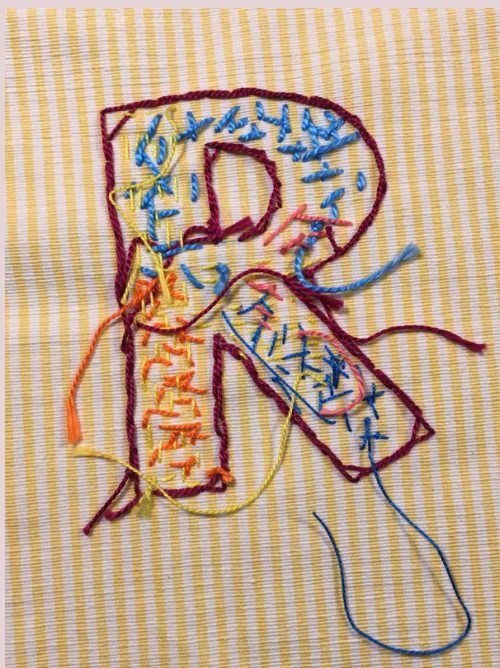
6 Knot your thread on the underneath side of the fabric and leave the tails long.

As we are working back to front, the finished side will be the opposite to the side you are working from.

7

When you are finished, turn it over to reveal the hidden workings of all your stitches.

8 Think about words that start with your letter that relate to garment workers and the issues they face in the fashion industry.

Write some words on the front and stitch over them in backstitch or chain stitch.

▶ This month we will have a special guest speaker from Stitched Up Manchester!

Find out more about their work inspiring action on sustainable fashion here: https://stitchedup.coop.

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 session.

Don't forget to bring a cuppa!

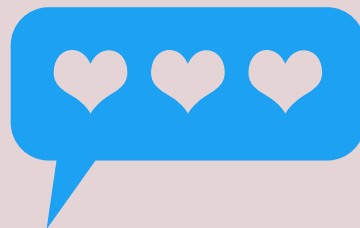This month we'll be online on **Saturday 27 March, 2.00pm - 3.30pm.**

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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