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The Fabric of Protest

March 2023

Create a quilted sampler



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 workshop on Saturday 18 March 2023.

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 #NothingAboutUsWithoutUs
phm.org.uk

In celebration of International Women's Day (IWD), we will be joined in this month's session by curator-activist Gill Crawshaw to discuss disabled women artists and their use of textiles in their art.

We will be taking inspiration from Lorina Bulwer's textile sampler, late 1800s, that is on display in the Nothing About Us Without Us (NAUWU) exhibition at the museum, on show until 16 October 2023. The NAUWU exhibition and The Fabric of Protest event are part of PHM's co-curated programme of activity exploring the history of disabled people's rights and activism.



Lorina Bulwer sampler late 1800s.
Image courtesy of Costume and Textile
Collection Norwich Castle Museum and
Art Gallery Norfolk-Museums Service

Lorina Bulwer was a British needleworker who created embroidered works whilst imprisoned in Great Yarmouth Workhouse during the late 1800s. These works can read as letters of protest or outrage at the conditions of her imprisonment in the workhouse.

Lorina used appliqué to create imagery and stitched text like a stream of consciousness, which conveyed her rage, her observations, and her humour.

Sampler description:

Handmade embroidered fabric sampler measuring 210mm x 210mm. Two figures wearing suits are stood facing each other. Both have one arm in the air and one down on a diagonal towards the other figure. The colours used are red, pink and beige and there is lots of text stitched all around the figures. The embroidered text reads:
'WITH MRS ANNA MARIA YOUNG / AND HER III CHILDREN

AH PALMER / UPS AND DOWNS / FAME ALSO / BASTARD SEAR / DAN MEADOWS / F. BURTON J. RILEY / OLD HARRIET SEWARD / TUNBRIDGES / TAYLORS OF / CHIPPENHAM / CAMBS

HURRAH / HOW / LONG / HAVE / YOU / BEEN ON / INTIMATE / TERMS / WITH / CROSSLEY / OF / SOMER / LEY / TON / PARK / AND / ROUND / ABOUTS

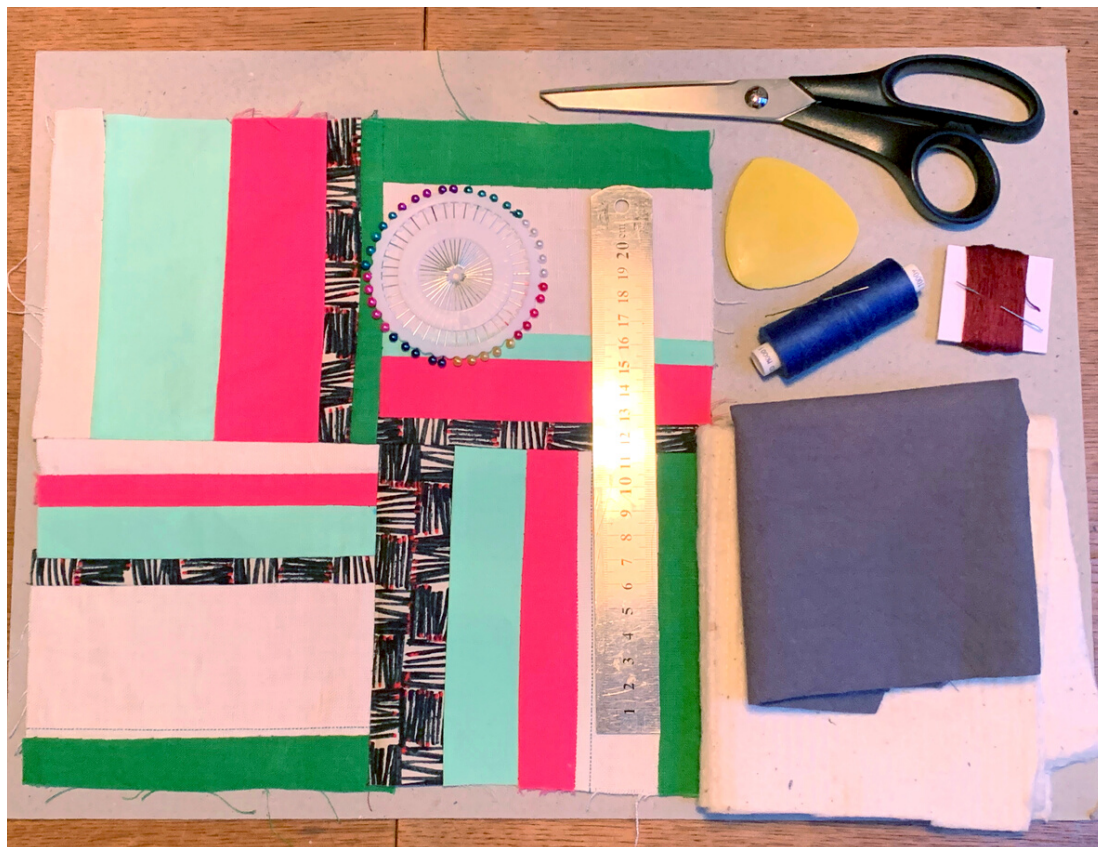
What will we be making?

We will be adding to a patchwork piece made in the [January 2023 online session](#), in which we discussed the Social Model of Disability and barriers that disable people. If you didn't come to the session in January, don't worry, you can use a plain piece of fabric instead.



Inspired by Lorina Bulwer's textile sampler, we will be stitching the theme of IWD 2023: Embrace Equity, onto our textile pieces, turning them into a quilted sampler. This year's theme allows us to think about the meaning of equity, and how equity relates to disability activism.

Materials



Materials you will need:

- The patchwork you made at the January 2023 session
OR card cut to 28cm X 28cm to make a template, and fabric to fit this size
- Wadding / felt or something soft to put between fabric layers (to be cut to 28cm x 28cm)
- Backing fabric to be cut to 32cm x 32cm
- Ruler, scissors
- Something to mark a line on fabric (can be chalk, pen or pencil)
- Sewing thread, embroidery thread
- Needle, pins



Measure and cut your fabrics

1

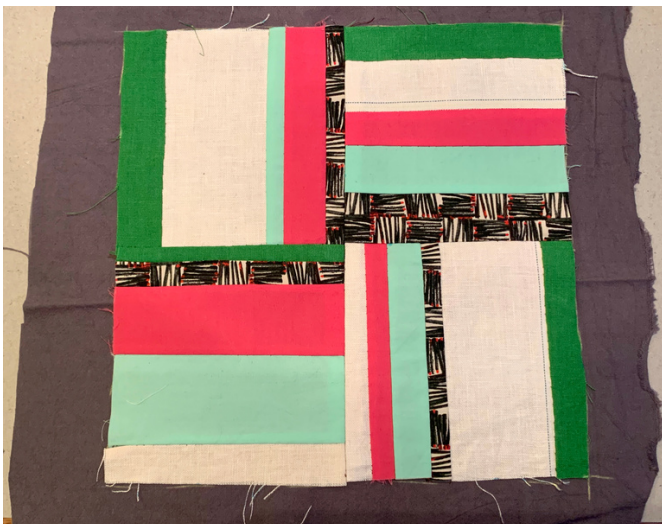
If using a new piece of fabric, cut to size by drawing around a card template (28cm x 28cm) and cutting out. If not, bring your patchwork from the January 2023 workshop.

Cut wadding (or soft middle layer) to the same size 28cm x 28cm as the top fabric (28cm x 28cm).



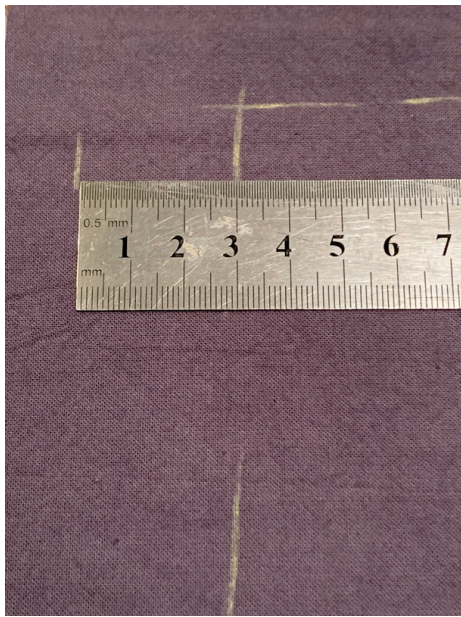
2

Place patchwork/newly cut fabric on top of backing fabric and mark around the outline with a pen or chalk.



3

Measure 3cm out from the edges of this outline, mark and cut.



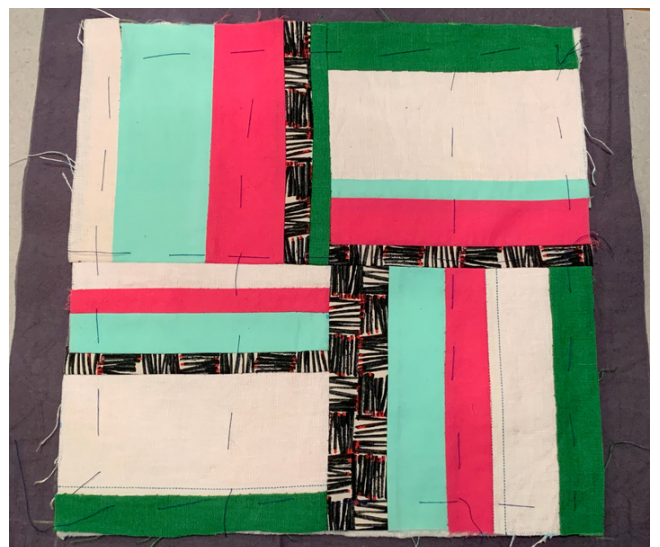
Layer and stitch your fabrics together

4

Layer the back fabric, the middle layer and the front fabric on top of each other and pin together.

**5**

Using a sewing thread make large 'basting stitches' through all three layers of fabric to keep them all together.



Basting stitch

Basting stitch is a large temporary stitch for securing fabric together.

Thread your needle with sewing thread but don't knot the end. From the front, put your needle through all three layers of fabric and out again. Pull the needle through leaving about a finger length of thread at the end not pulled through.



Repeat large stitches (about 3cm long) along the middle of the piece and then out to the edges from the middle. Don't worry too much about how you do this, it can be random, you are just making sure your layers are stitched together securely. When finished, just leave another finger length of thread and snip, no need to knot. This will make it easier when you pull out the stitches.



Stitch your words

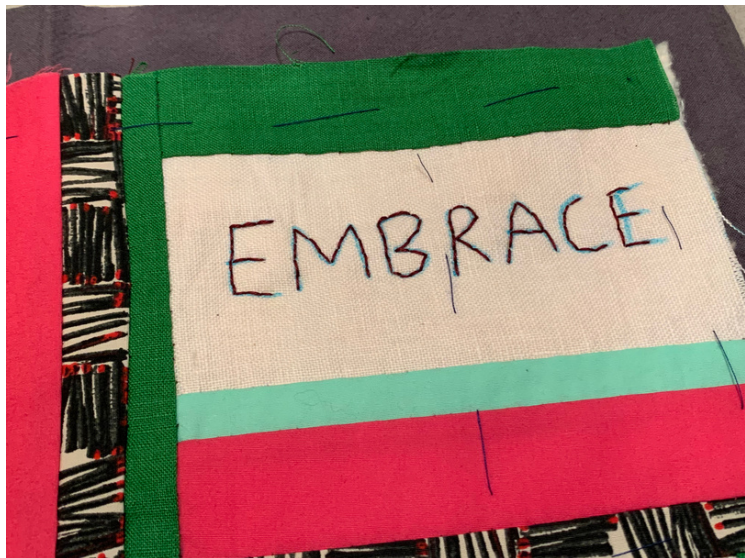
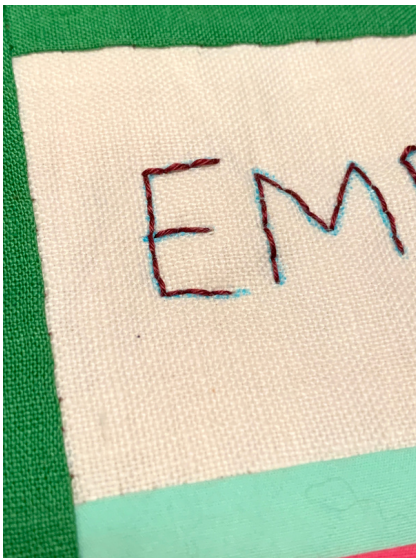
6

Write the words 'embrace equity' onto the top fabric, making sure not to go too close to the edges - leave at least 2cm clear on all sides.



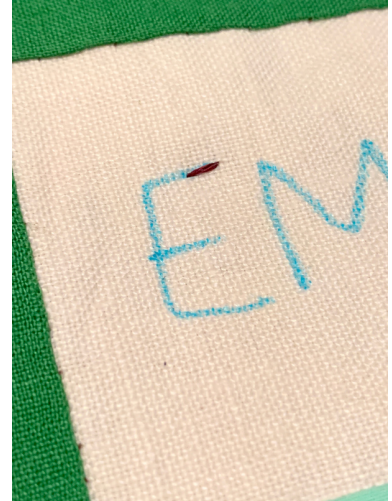
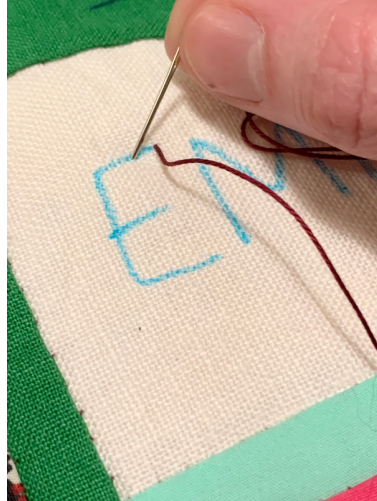
7

Thread your needle with embroidery thread and use a back stitch to stitch over the letters you have written.

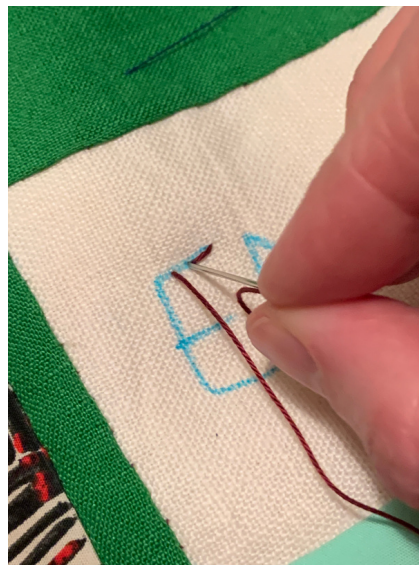


Back stitch technique

Pull your thread up from the back until the knot stops.
Make a stitch, going through all three layers to the back.



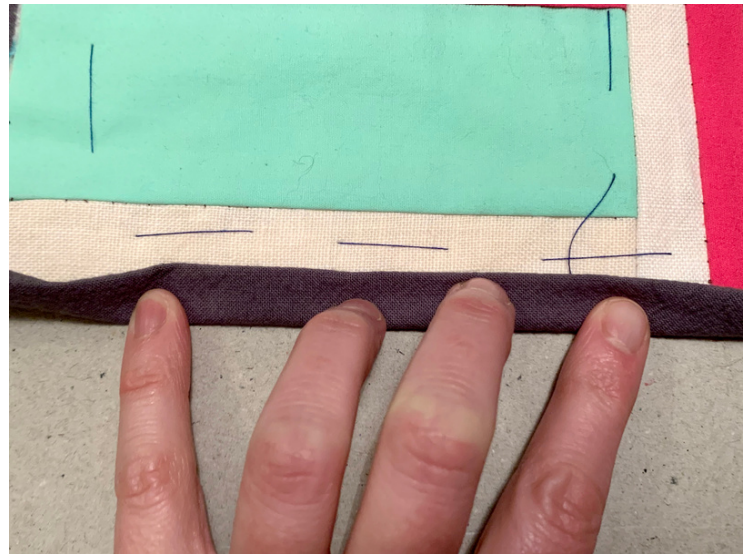
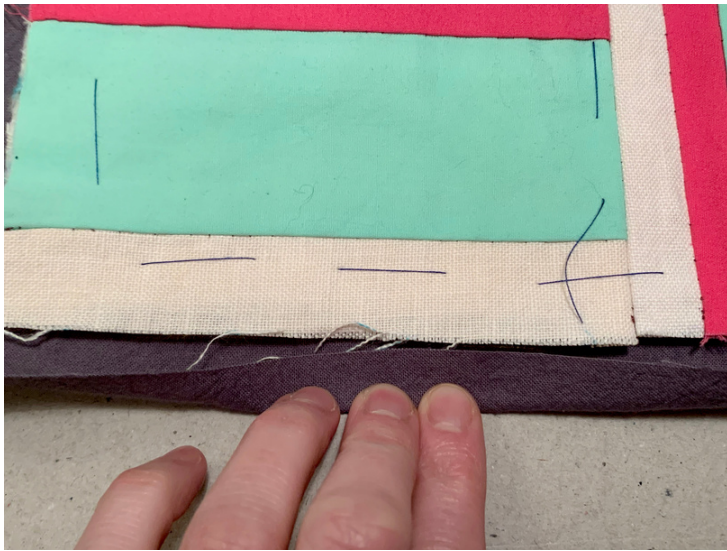
Pull the needle back through from the back, a stitch length away.
Put the needle back into the last stitch hole, filling the
stitch gap to make a continuous line. Continue to follow the
marks going forwards a stitch and back to fill in the gap.



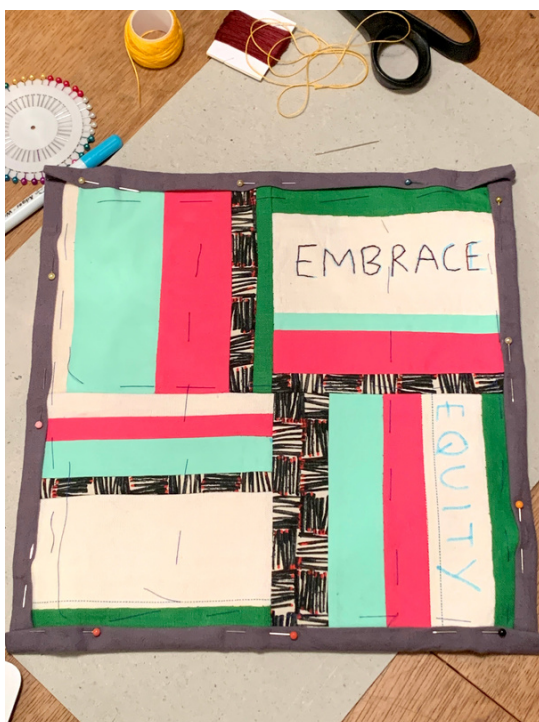
Secure your layers of fabric

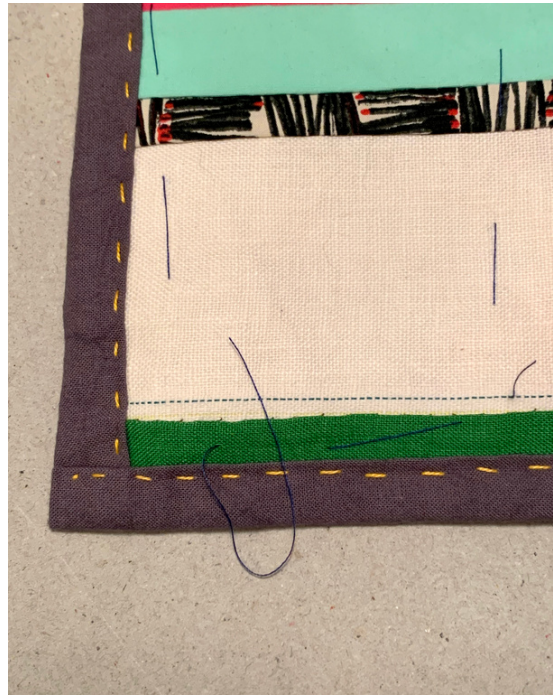
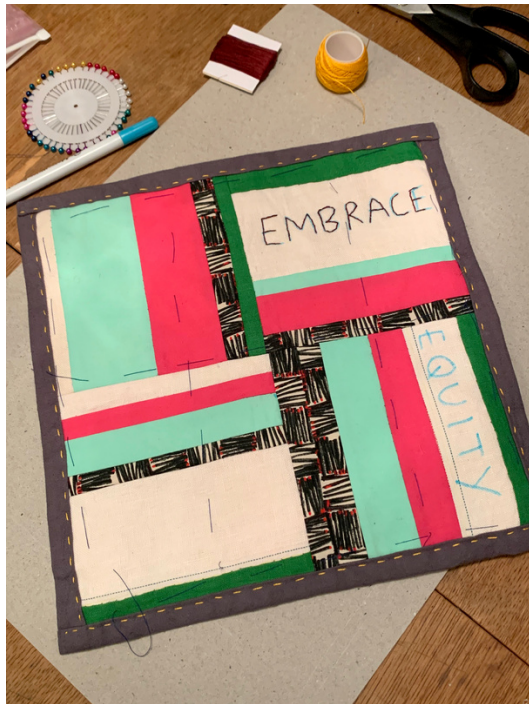
- 8** When you have finished stitching your letters you can remove the basting stitches by pulling them out.

Fold over the edge of the backing fabric towards the front, folding once up to the edge of the top fabric and then again, over the edge of the top fabric.



- 9** Pin in place and then stitch to secure using a running stitch.
A running stitch is a line of stitches that run in and out of the fabric all at once. Push your needle in, out, in, out and pull the thread through





Finished piece



Nothing About Us Without Us exhibition

Explore the history of disabled people's activism and ongoing fight for rights and inclusion.

Explore the online exhibition content through Large Print, Easy Read guides, British Sign Language (BSL) interpreted and captioned films and audio narrated films.

Visit the exhibition in person or take part in our programme of accessible events and activities to accompany the exhibition.

PHM Blog

Read curator-activist Gill Crawshaw's reflections on how disabled people have used textiles as a powerful tool of communication, and on some of the objects on show in the Nothing About Us Without Us exhibition. This will be published on [PHM's blog](#) on Monday 10 April 2023.

Read curator-activist Gill Crawshaw's articles on Disability Arts Online about "[Shoddy](#)" [an exhibition she curated of work by disabled artists](#) and [Secret library Leeds Heritage Blog](#) posts.

International Women's Day – Embrace Equity

Find out more about the [International Women's Day 2023](#) campaign: 'Equality versus Equity: What's the difference as we #EmbraceEquity for IWD 2023 and beyond?'

Discover more about Lorina Bulwer:

- Explore [Norfolk Museum website which includes further resources](#)
- [Read Dolly Sen's blog post about Lorina Butler on Disability Arts Online](#)
- Watch [Dolly Sen talk about Lorina Bulwer](#)
- Read Rachel May's blog '[Transforming the decorative into dissent](#)' on the Wellcome collection 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 will be online on
Saturday 18 March
1.00pm - 2.30pm



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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