





museum of tiny art

Ira Kutsyna embroiders miniature versions of Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet and more, in the green city of Kiev, Ukraine.

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Ira uses her needle like a paintbrush to create stitches the size of rice grains. Once finished, she turns her pint-size art into a brooch – nifty for a shirt, bag, scarf, or cap.

By day, Ira is an editor for a scientific journal at a research institute, highlighting issues of nuclear power safety. When the city slumbers at night, she embroiders her little wonders – from red, juicy strawberries, to the *Mona Lisa* and blossoming purple flowers – all found under her store name, Blooming Day.

How did you learn to embroider? Ever since I can remember, I have been obsessed with art, but embroidery never interested me. I had lessons in simple stitching at school but I found it quite

boring. About ten years later, I began making cross-stitch pictures. I surprised myself! A few years later, I tried my hand at crafting embroidery brooches. My experience comes from both successful and failed experiments.

How do you make your brooches? I find a picture as a reference, then I choose my thread colours and grab a piece of felt as the base. Next I outline borders of the brooch with a pen and draw contours following proportions. After these preparations, I start to embroider in a needle-painting technique, meaning I use threads and a needle to make straight stitches which look like paint strokes. If I recreate a painting (for example, the *Mona Lisa*) I try to repeat the directions of

strokes in it. The *Mona Lisa* has been my most challenging piece to date because of the facial details. Normally, the stitching process takes about five to seven hours. The *Mona Lisa* took me three days.

What is your favourite brooch? I have two favourites! My first is my bluebird brooch. It was one of my first designs and I picked a bluebird because I've always felt they carry kindness and hope. My other is Van Gogh's *Starry Night*. It wasn't drawn from reality because there is no such landscape. It came from his imagination alone – it is pure impression. It's as if you can jump into the picture and walk through the village under that starry sky.





Where do you draw inspiration from?

I draw inspiration from great artists, especially impressionists: Van Gogh, Monet, Edgar Degas and others. Their strong, confident brushstrokes remind me of embroidery stitches and I bravely imagine we can see the world through the same eyes. When I saw their artworks in museums, I was over the moon! I love to explore the details in a painting, especially when I have seen it in person and can recreate that.

At the same time, I believe nature is our greatest piece of art, so careful consideration of it can be my biggest source of inspiration. You don't need to pay an entrance fee to see remarkable colours, shades and textures. I just look closely at plants, birds, clouds and other natural masterpieces.

What other embroidery projects do you want to try?

I have an extremely long list! I love the idea of making a small series of brooches. A goal of mine is to create bird brooches – farm, tropical and garden. And of course, there are many great paintings I haven't yet copied!

Who's your biggest supporter? I am lucky to have a lot of support online and from friends. I appreciate all their kind words and feedback. It keeps me on track.

My biggest and most practical support is my husband who helps me with my most annoying tasks

– buying materials and dealing with shipping issues. Thanks to him, I have more time for embroidery instead

of standing in long queues at the post office.

Are you working on any exciting projects?

Yes! I'm making reproductions of Van Gogh's art in embroidery hoops. It's taking a lot more time but these pieces are incredibly detailed! My first three, *Starry Night*, *Sunflowers* and *Grey Hat Self-Portrait* are done and more are underway.

What's it like living in Kiev? Kiev is the capital of Ukraine and its biggest city with a population of about 3 million. Our seasons are opposite to Australia. When it's hot for you, we experience the frosty cold of winter. Our daytime temperature can drop to -10°C. Maybe that's why people like me prefer to stay at home creating handmade goods!