

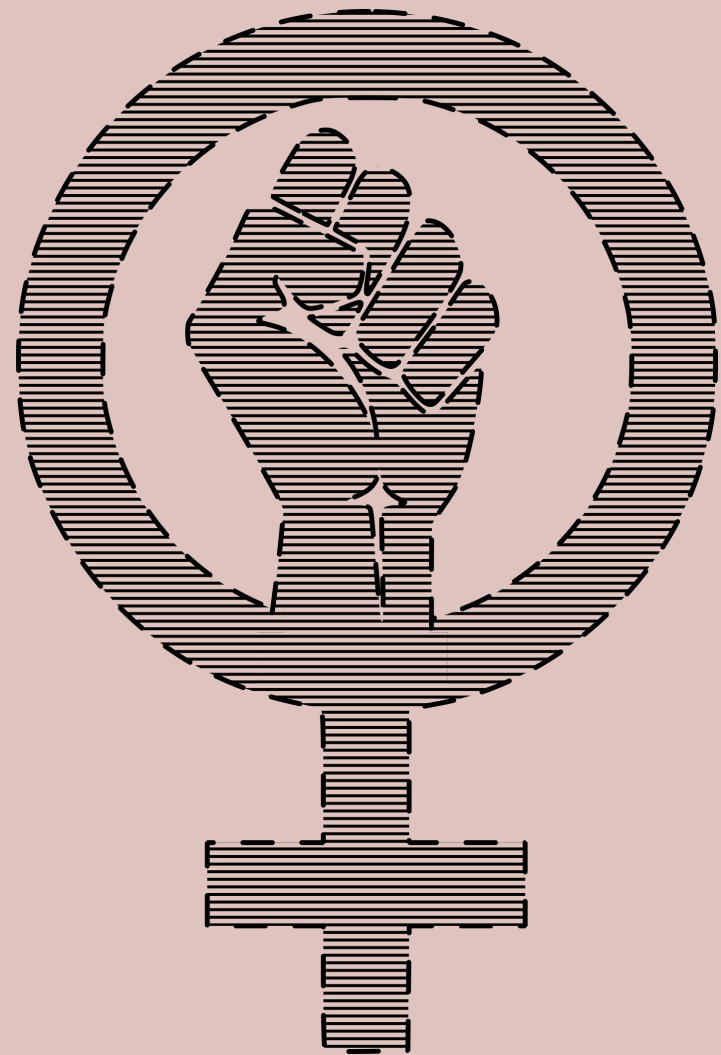


To those that paved the way before us,

THANK YOU

# Gentle Anarchy

art at the intersection of craft and activism



A zine by Sam Baine



Samantha Baine is a senior at UAB majoring in English Literature. Born and raised in small town, Alabama, she will always call this her home. On campus, she is a member of Alpha Omicron Pi sorority and a tutor in the University Writing Center. Besides that, you can find her cavorting around around town, looking for the nearest animal to pet, with a book in one hand and tea in the other.

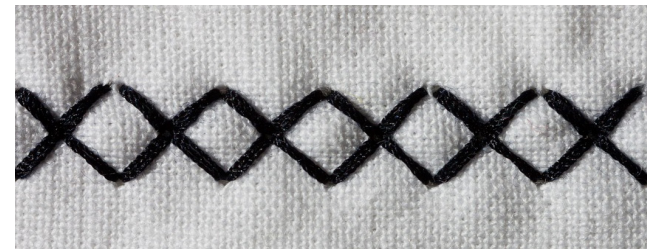
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#### Back Stitch:

Thread the needle and, with it, make a single, straight stitch as long or short as you want (but usually around 1/4 inch). Continue along the pattern line, but come up a space ahead and bring your needle back down into the same hole at the end of the last stitch you made—you are bringing your stitch back to the end of the last one. An example of when to use this would be whenever you are outlining or stitching line drawings.

#### Cross Stitch:

Start from the backside of the fabric and pull the needle through the front. This is now the bottom left corner of your X. Needle goes through the front to the back from the top right corner of your X. Push from backside of your fabric to the front again via the lower right corner. Finish by pushing from front to back via the top left corner.



#### Attributes:

pg 2: Wikimedia Commons  
pg 4, 6, 7: Libby Simpson, ohmygollyembroidery.com  
pg 5: Craftivist Collective, Flickr, July 2009  
pg 8: Craftivist Collective, Flickr, February 2018, by Tom Price  
Back Cover: maxpixel.net

## GET STARTED ON YOUR OWN

Stitching can be a calming and pleasant break from the world, as you begin to focus on the little things you can do to make a difference, like how to use the process of making to engage thoughtfully in the issues you care about; how to see every detail of your creation as important: from the color and fonts to the size and overall message; and how craftivism can create conversations and action in places where social justice is not often discussed.

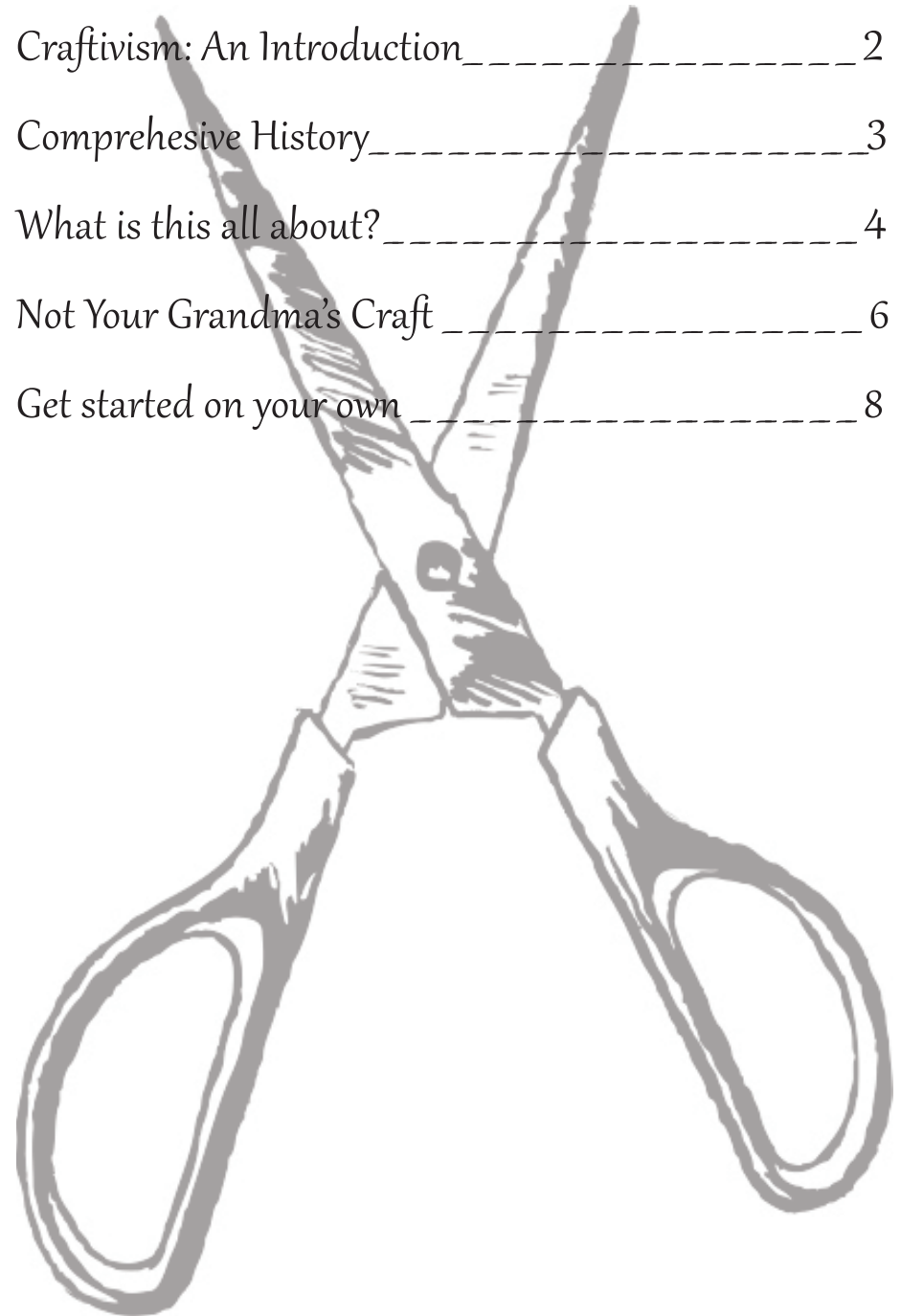


### Hand Embroidery Basics

What you need to get started can all be found at any fabric or craft store: Hoops, Floss (multitudes of colors can be found in assorted packs or sold in multiples of the same size), Needles (this just depends on the thickness of the fiber you are working with, so find a sewing needle with an appropriately sized eye to allow thread to easily pass through), Fabric (cotton evenweave structures will be easiest at first, but any fabric is possible—just takes practice), Scissors (smaller fabric or embroidery scissors are more convenient for these smaller projects, but anything that will cut thread works).

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## CRAFTIVISM: AN INTRODUCTION



Craftivism, a term originally coined by anti-sweatshop activist Betsy Greer, is used to describe the political action of engaging with social justice through the use of craft as a tool.

This basically refers to personalized activism centered around your own political framework, which allows everyone to customize their particular skills to address certain causes they are passionate about. By advocating the use of creativity for the improvement of the world, their skill and knowledge can now be used to fight for and show political support within many different outlets.

Activist craft has been around for thousands of years, but really took off within DIY punk spaces. Sewing and the like has long been seen as women's work, something women were supposed to do to distract themselves and to pass the time. But by taking something seen traditionally as homey, and placing it in an environment where no one can deny its usefulness, the surrounding culture then subverts its worthless denigration. DIY culture has always worked in this way as a reaction to commercially exploitative mass production, but it specifically returns now, in the context of the economic crisis, as a challenge to the mediation of commodity: craftivists propose removing the disconnect between laborer and consumer through the insistence of human artistry over machine work and productivity.

*What is it like for you to have so many people interested in your work? Do you think that affects your work in any way?*

The large number of followers on Instagram is something I have very mixed emotions about. I am very intimidated by the number of people that are following me and my work. I am actually a very shy, introverted person who really hates being the centre of attention so it really is daunting to look at that follower number at times. But, on the other hand, I am thrilled that people are liking what I do enough to want to see more of it. And there is no denying that it has helped immensely with sales!

*How do you think you are using this form as a step away from how it is traditionally viewed?*

Embroidery has traditionally been seen as women's work and for that reason deemed unimportant and domestic. So it is fun to take something like that and use it to create subversive art. I personally think that despite how it was seen throughout history, embroidery has always been a way for women to tell their stories. Often, it was the only opportunity for them to do so. I think now we are paying homage to all the women who came before us.



## NOT YOUR GRANDMA'S CRAFT

Libby Simpson, of @ohmygollyembroidery, is a completely self-taught embroiderer who I spoke to about how feminism and politics have shaped her livelihood.

### *How and why did you start embroidering?*

When I was pregnant 6 years ago and on maternity leave, I wanted a little hobby to fill the time while I was waiting for baby to arrive. After my daughter was born it got forgotten about for about a year as having a newborn means no time for anything else! I taught myself the basics of cross stitch but soon found it quite limiting. I never have the patience for the patterns and all the counting so I decided to try hand embroidery. Once I picked the needle up again, I just could not put it down!

### *What are your thoughts on the term "craftivism" and the subversive nature of new embroidery?*

I think, like with any artistic medium, embroidery is a way of telling a story or expressing an opinion. It can be as subtle or as provocative as you want it to be. The idea of traditionally surrounding it can be turned on its head and create something that makes a statement about preconceived notions of what is feminine or ladylike. A lot of my work features images of women that I find inspiring. It sometimes makes the message more compelling to see it delicately stitched onto fabric and it is a good incentive to create something meaningful that hopefully at least gets people thinking, and ideally, talking. I guess this is essentially what craftivism is to me and I definitely dabble in it from time to time. I tend to just get really mad about stuff and stitch something angrily! It is quite cathartic for me to now have a creative outlet for all my frustrations about things like politics.



## COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY

In the pre-Industrial Revolution era, craft skills were needed to dutifully care for a family and maintain a working household. These practical skills were basically used to measure a woman's worth and marriageability; however, as time went on, these gender roles, perpetuated by adherence to tradition, gave women an indispensable, albeit overshadowed, seat in history. Women held together their communities by providing necessities—they did not have time to start wars, they were too busy weaving clothes to keep their children warm and praying everyone survived the winter.

Given the states of materialism and mass production and the rise of feminism in such a short timespan as within the Industrial Revolution, the beginning of the 21st century was seemingly the perfect time for the evolution of such an idea as craftivism. When there arose a cause that was important to them, women spoke out with their own unique skill set. Craftivism subverts and challenges the female stereotypes about domestic craft while reclaiming the value stored in this rich history of traditionally feminine culture.

As mass production increased, there became no need to knit sweaters for warmth or weave baskets to hold vegetables; crafting was bypassed by modernity and was mainly used as war effort relief during the 20th century. In the 90s & early 2000s, enough time had spanned between the economic and social disparities between women and men from the 1970s that women began to look again at domesticity as something to be valued instead of ignored.

Post-9/11 showed a rise in craftivism as a pervading sense of hopelessness to change anything in the world was unleashed along with anti-war and anti-capitalistic sentiments. After craft skills regained popularity, the idea emerged that instead of using solely your voice to advocate political viewpoints, you could use your creativity, showing ultimately how feminism and resilience can coexist & coincide.



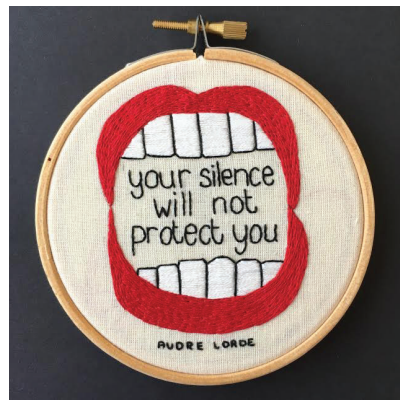


## WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?

Humans create things to connect beyond ourselves, inspire passion, and deepen our understanding of the world. Craftivism is then less about mass action and more about focusing on immediate steps toward crafting a dialogue with others in hope toward a better understanding and further processing of the surrounding world. It is vital to go



beyond banners and petitions as ways of fighting for a cause; we must personally work on healing and gaining insight from it. Atrocities are making headlines daily and it is up to us on how we react to it. Do not approach issues with anger and shouting, but with gentle



protest. Gentleness is not weak, it requires self-control in the face of anger, injustice, and sadness. This lets us have conversation instead of an argument, debate instead of shouting, and collaboration instead of opposition. At its core, craftivism is about channeling that anger you feel towards the world into something productive and useful and in a loving way.

The use of craft as a tool is powerful, personal, and political, but it is also:

### Gentle:

Respectful activism works to engage people in conversation. It is used to empathize and connect with others by having us all listen to each other and work together to be the catalyst for change in our world and mind.

### Transformational:

It is a healing form of self-care; craft takes hours—in a good way—which works to connect and transform ourselves.

### Joyful:

It brings hope to the world by helping to visualize a more beautiful and tranquil world. Activism alone can be tiring and wear you down, craftivism brings a dose of joy, which sustains us to further make the world a better place.

### Graceful:

You are making something new & beautiful out of pain experienced in the world.

### Quiet:

By engaging with social justice on your own terms (activism for introverts), like exercising your inner monologue or quietly discussing issues within smaller groups, you are invited others to be curious, get involved, and further see what you are doing or engaging in.

