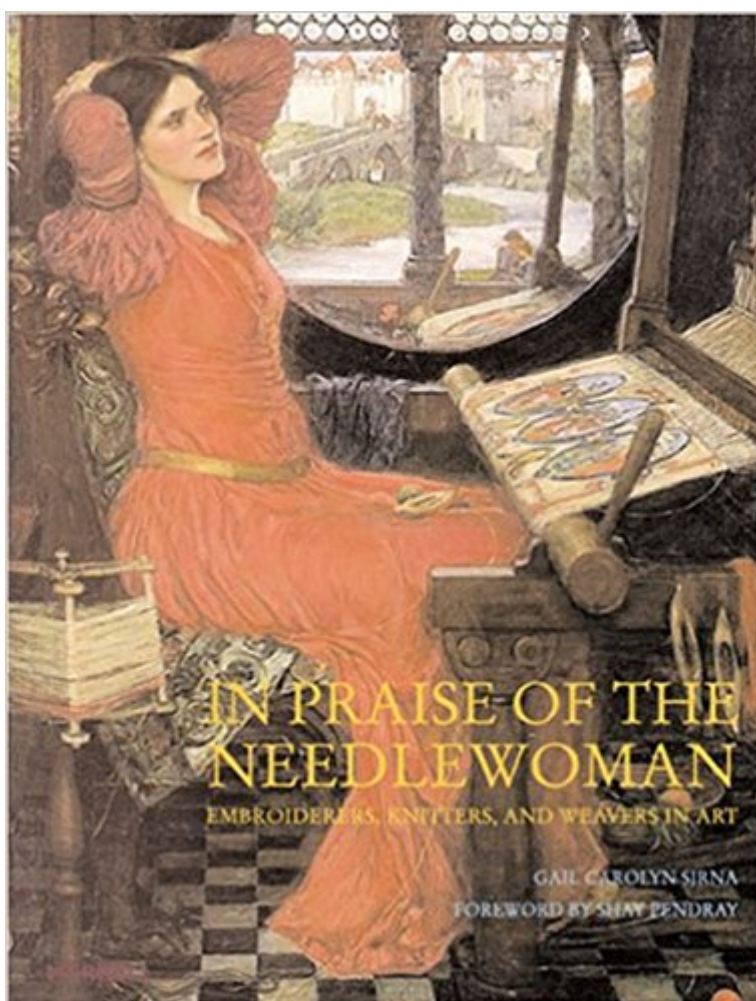


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In Praise Of The Needlewoman: Embroiderers, Knitters, Lacemakers And Weavers In Art



Synopsis

This charming and rewarding collection of beautiful paintings celebrates the centuries-old iconography of women engaged in needlework, an activity that has always united women from all countries and in all stations of life, whether taken up for practical or artistic purposes. Artists as long ago as the Middle Ages sought to capture the needleworker's quiet concentration and domestic milieu, to convey the social and cultural connotations of this largely female domain, and its symbolic resonance. Many of the loveliest of these paintings are depicted, including works by Vermeer, Chardin, Velazquez and Dali, by the Pre-Raphaelite school and by the impressionists, in particular the works of such women artists as Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot.

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Customer Reviews

Stunning - THE LADY This beautiful new book would make a lovely Christmas gift for embroiderers everywhere - fascinating reading for stitchers - CROSS STITCH GOLD

Gail Carolyn Sirna is an award-winning embroiderer and a regular columnist for Needlepoint Now. A teacher of needlework for over twenty-five years, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from America's National Academy of Needle Arts in 2004.

I have hundreds of needlework books including many on historic needlework. I am a student of Tudor history and greatly enjoy reading about Bess of Hardwick who stitched with Mary Queen of

Scots and preserved her most important works. I love the paintings and museum pieces which depict Tudor, Stuart and later embroidery in dress and decoration. One of my best acquisitions recently is *In Fine Style: The Art of Tudor and Stuart Fashion* and I have many museum guides from the V&A Museum in London which I have visited. Recently, I also purchased *The praise of the needle: John Taylor's poem of 1631* because we're always seeing quotes from it in our needlework pattern, technique and history books. This led inevitably to noticing the title of the reviewed book and, boy, am I glad I came across it!! A feeling of great pride surges through me as I thoroughly peruse each illustration. I have read the book cover to cover and picked out my favorite pieces of art, almost 100% portraits. The exception is Barrias's "Girl from the Megare, Sitting and Spinning" which is a marble sculpture in the famous Musée d'Orsay in Paris. It depicts in the classical Greek style a half-nude young woman dramatically holding a distaff and spindle in her hands. It is so lifelike you can easily imagine the thread stretched between the two. Perhaps the figure is Clotho, the one of the Three Fates who spins each human's Thread of Life? It's interesting to ponder. There were three things that surprised me, two that annoy me and one that puzzles me. The three surprises were the number of pieces the author/researcher found to choose among--480--for inclusion in the book; the large number of female artists whose works are included; and the inclusion of Pierre-Auguste Renoir's "The Artist's Son Jean Renoir Sewing" from 1899-1900. Jean Renoir, painted in a girly dress with very long strawberry blond hair with a ribbon, is busily embroidering at about age 6. He will grow up to be as famous a filmmaker as his father is an artist. I realize from this book how little I really know of art...the Mona Lisa is about my speed I guess. But here I happily learn about Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) who has several pieces included. One of my favorite portraits in the book is her "Young Mother Sewing," 1900. My absolute favorite painting is "The Young Seamstress," 1898, by Adolphe-William Bouguereau (1825-1905), the child's face being so poignant and angelic. One of the very minor things that annoy me is the very first painting, the quite bizarre "Gabrielle d'Estrées and One of her Sisters," c. 1595. This painting is included because it is the only one from the 16th century. Its qualification to be included is a little precarious because it is only way, WAY in the background that you eventually make out a woman in a red dress busily stitching. What leaps out immediately is that one of the two women shown nude from the waist up is pinching the other's nipple. Both are beautiful and milky-white (aristocratic) figures gazing at the viewer and not particularly paying attention to the pinching. Gabrielle, the pinchee, is the mistress of Henri IV of France. It is unknown if the pincher is her actual sibling or her successor mistress after she died in childbirth at age 26. You may be muttering, "oh, grow up, Jane." But really...google the title of the painting and tell me if you even notice the stitcher. The

second annoyance is snubbing Norman Rockwell and his 1924 "Norman Rockwell: The Sampler," Vintage Old Art Print, 1924, 11.1/2 X 15 Inches. This is a very apropos painting, the only one depicting the making of an actual sampler and showing a finished framed sampler on the wall. The puzzlement is Carl Moon's "Hopi Weaver," c. 1937-43, shown after the Foreword by Shay Pendray (who adds cachet to the work). It is a male weaver and when Moon's female "Navajo Weaver" of the same time frame is the 2nd to last painting shown, I don't know why the male is put in the forefront of a book celebrating female needleworkers. I would have thought showing these two works together for comparison in the chronological order used would have made sense. I have a BA in English but it was my English husband who first apprehended that the cover portrait is of the Lady of Shalott. Such an excellent choice to draw your attention to this great book. And great it is. This has become one of the most meaningful books in my huge library. I feel it raises the status of what has heretofore been the lowly stitcher to that of an artist. Highly recommended. [On a sad note, I am unable to upload images here so you can see some of the artwork. It's appalling that a book like this has no Look Inside! feature and deleted almost all customer images on books on July 15, 2013. I've always tried to be helpful in my reviews by illustrating them with scans such that I'm virtually paging through books for you. A picture is worth a thousand words....]

Beautiful book! Very informative and well written

I gave this as a gift to my mother and she really loves it. She called to tell me that the pictures are very colorful and beautiful. I ordered this from the seller a full six weeks before it arrived in her mail, so just be aware they may ship this the cheapest and slowest route possible. I am just happy this is a quality product and my mother loves her gift.

A most interesting and beautiful book. A delight to read and the text adds so much information that one would sometimes overlook just by looking at the painting. Being a needlewoman myself I feel honored to have something in common with all of these women who have gone before me. A wonderful book that I sincerely recommend to anyone but especially all needlewomen.

Gorgeous photo's in this book, which is why I purchased it.

Lovely coffee table book

I got it as a gift for my Mom. She is Embroider and Lacemaker so she was pleased with the book. Some pictures were a little racy.

I collect books on knitting in artwork and is a real gem! The pictures could not be any better. Each one is lovelier than the page before. You will never tire of it.

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