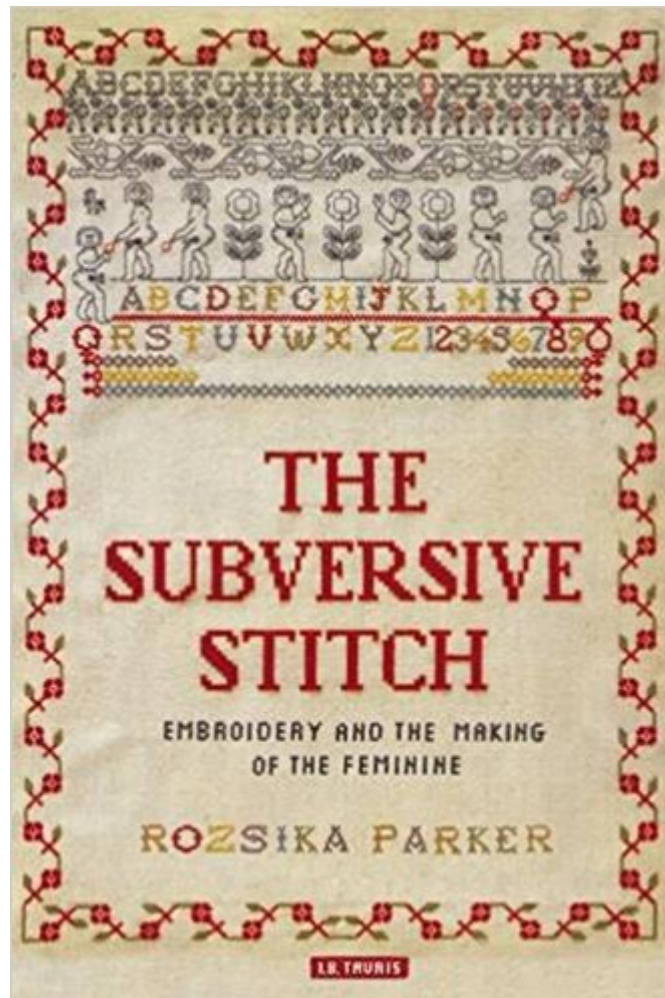


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# The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery And The Making Of The Feminine



## Synopsis

Rozsika Parker's now classic re-evaluation of the reciprocal relationship between women and embroidery has brought stitchery out from the private world of female domesticity into the fine arts, created a major breakthrough in art history and criticism, and fostered the emergence of today's dynamic and expanding crafts movements. The Subversive Stitch is now available again with a new Introduction that brings the book up to date with exploration of the stitched art of Louise Bourgeois and Tracey Emin, as well as the work of new young female and male embroiderers. Rozsika Parker uses household accounts, women's magazines, letters, novels and the works of art themselves to trace through history how the separation of the craft of embroidery from the fine arts came to be a major force in the marginalisation of women's work. Beautifully illustrated, her book also discusses the contradictory nature of women's experience of embroidery: how it has inculcated female subservience while providing an immensely pleasurable source of creativity, forging links between women.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A book wonderfully rich, not only in information, but in people and ideas." -- Guardian  
"A marvellously written and illustrated book." -- Times Educational Supplement

Rozsika Parker's books include *Old Mistresses: Women, Art & Ideology* and *Framing Feminism*

(both written with Griselda Pollock) and *Torn in Two: The Experience of Maternal Ambivalence*.  
Her latest book is *The Anxious Gardener*. She practices as a psychotherapist in London.

excellent book, historical uses of stitching to enforce "femininity"

I bought this for my final year major art project, and ended up using as a reference for art history as well. Excellent.

Good book for students of stitching, embroidery and the role of women's work in the early days of stitch and embroidery

This book is important and fascinating. It is an important piece of art history, as well as the history of embroidery. It never seemed to me to be dismissive of the medium and said instead that what women did in the past was eventually denigrated by others, e.g., the guilds, church officials (not the author). This book is a part of the reinstatement of women's place in art history, as well as fiber/needle arts. I say it is fascinating because I am very interested in how people lived and created art, throughout time. And it is of interest because it tells what happened to a beautiful art form and how it became devalued by a mostly male-controlled art world, except in certain settings. There are other books to read about the subject, that will round out the appreciation of needle arts, including "Embroidered Textiles" by Sheila Paine. I have read dozens of books on this subject, including books on the tools of the trade, ancient and new. I embroider and I vote, so I vote this book "excellent".

As an AVID embroiderer and feminist, I had see this book often over the years but had never gotten around to reading it. Ugh. Terrible! I want my money back. The nicest thing to say is that it is very dated, and for the time, it was probably important. I just found it to be a very bad, boring, repetitive study that really doesn't say much. She really just says the same thing over and over and over: Embroidery has "signified" femininity through the ages. That's about it, folks. Well, we learn that sometimes this has been an empowering thing, but mostly it has been a way of keeping women in their place and submissive, etc. Occasionally women have rebelled against it. That's really it. That is it. I don't think I read more than three chapters though I scanned the rest. What I found so offensive is that Parker is clearly not an embroiderer herself, doesn't know anything about the medium, and really couldn't care less about it. I was amazed at how totally insensitive and dismissive of it she is.

It is the subject of her book after all. But her attitude is pretty much of a distanced, "scientific" observer reporting on something she had absolutely zero knowledge or understanding of herself. If you are an embroiderer, do not look to this book to tell you anything. I learned zilch except maybe a historical fact or two. A really good book about women and embroidery has yet to be written.

If you've ever looked at samplers or thought of the ways in which needlework shaped the lives of women for centuries (mostly in the negative sense), you will enjoy this book immensely. Parker takes one of the central tasks expected of women in the 18th and 19th centuries and shows how women used needlework as an outlet to express feelings of dismay and dislike. It just goes to show you: where there's a will, there's a way. If you enjoy learning about women's lives in the past, and have either an interest or an aversion to needlework yourself, I think you will enjoy this most unusual history.

Wow, I'm impressed with this book. Fascinating, well researched and detailed history of women and embroidery. This is a must read for anyone, especially women, who embroider as their primary artistic expression. As an artist who is working within this medium to excavate and reveal the living present of misogyny, this book has enriched my understanding of the work I do. Highly highly recommended.

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