Stitched Illustration

Stimulating in a Human Way and Feminine in an Engaging Way

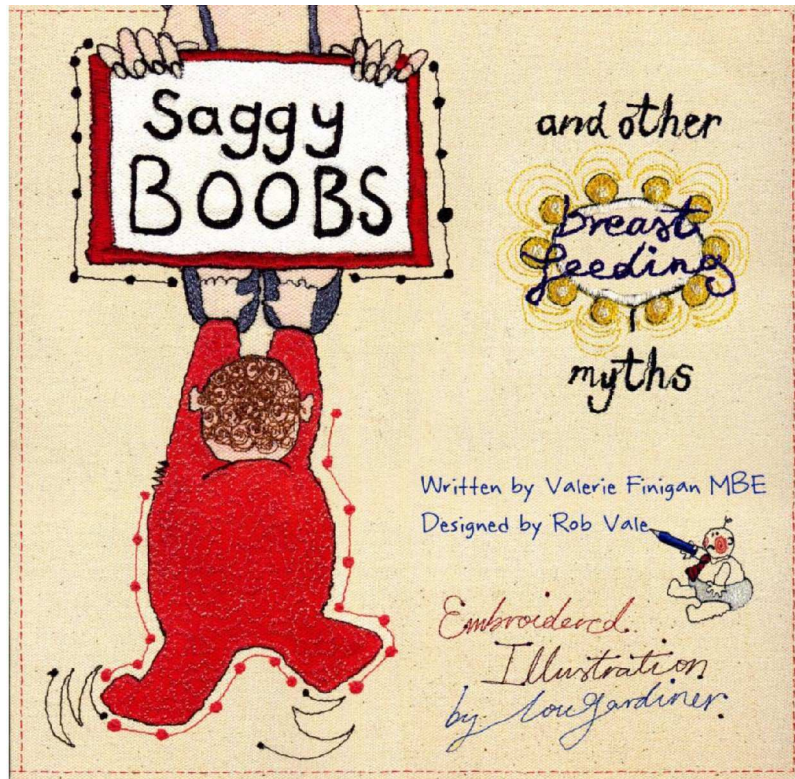Samantha
Harvey
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Figure 2: Louise Gardiner, Cover of: *Finigan, Valerie, Saggy Boobs and Other Breastfeeding Myths*, 2008.

Figure 3: Lizzie Finn, Advert for Apple Computers, c.2002.

Stitched Illustration:
Stimulating in a Human Way
and Feminine in an Engaging Way[1]

Design and illustration are now an integral part of our lives appearing almost everywhere[2]. As the number of images competing for our attention increases each one needs to work harder in order to stand out and engage the viewer. The recent trend of handmade illustration, of which the dominant media used is stitch[3], adds an energy and humanity to images which ensures that they are not just noticed, but that they actively engage the viewer.

Stitched illustrations contrast significantly with the slick, perfect lines which characterise the vector-based images which remain the dominant aesthetic of illustration today. Although both vector and stitched images can be beautiful and communicate well, they each achieve this differently. Smooth images create a 'hyper-reality' which slightly separates the viewer from the illustration; whereas stitched images have an esoteric element which engages the viewer on a more human level. These differences relate to how we perceive texture: to our haptic sense.

Superficially, handmade illustrations seem to be a reaction against the dominance of technology in our lives, however the reality is more complex. Historical connections ensure that the textiles world is not totally independent of technology. Contemporary illustrators tend to move between analogue and digital worlds relatively easily, their work is: 'handmade in a digital sort of way and graphic in a crafty sort of way.'[4]

Figure 4: Andy Potts, BBC Proms: Main Brand Illustration, 2008.
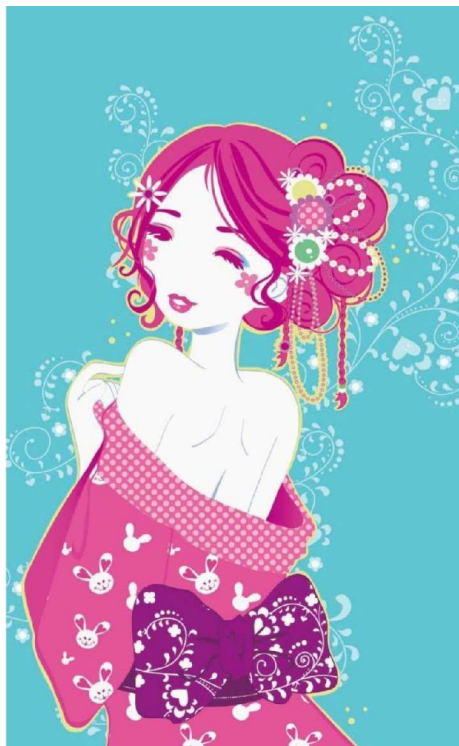

Figure 5: Liz Lorini, Bubblegum Geisha, 2008.

Figure 6: Eboy, Santa Poster, detail, 2008.

Until recently craftiness and in particular embroidery, was a symbol of repressive domesticity and women's complicity in this situation. Many contemporary stitched illustrations embrace the femininity which stitch symbolises, without the burden of repressive doctrine. The illustrations result from a reaction to the dominance of the masculine as much as a response to the dominance of technology.

This essay will explore how the recent development of stitched illustration has been affected by the importance of texture; by the change in cultural attitude to stitch and by the relationship between cloth and technology. Each of these three factors will be explored in turn.

Visual in an elementary way and evocative in a textural way

Most people working in craft disciplines instinctively know the importance of texture in their work and the urge to touch which it creates in the viewer - even when the work is rendered as a flat image. The application of this intuitive knowledge to illustration and graphic communication is increasing. Research into how this sensation is achieved is only recently developing.

Commercial illustration in the latter part of the Twentieth Century was largely characterised by manipulated photography and vector or pixellated perfection; lacking textural detail as can be seen in Figures 4-6. This slick aesthetic styling, encouraged by the computer programs used to create them, is seductive. It can however be alienating[5]. Although there is movement and life

Figure 8: Louise Gardiner: *Embroidered Lady with Pram* as it appeared in *The Guardian*, 24 April 2003. Original artwork 28cmx30cm

Figure 9: Hanna Melin, *A man buys a motorcycle on Ebay thinking he made a real bargain. its a shame the motorcycle doesn't work at all*, Illustration for a short story, *The New York Times*, 25 February 2007.

in the images shown here, the artificiality of the smooth rendering creates a distance and disconnection between the viewer and the image. Handmade images re-establish the human connection, even when combined with computer imagery, and re-engage the viewer[6].

Dynamism, animation, tactility and more human and involving images are the key characteristics which stitch adds to an illustration[7]. Eleanor Bowley says:

> I often find that people always reach out to touch [my image] because it's different from a flat drawing, it's involving the viewer in this way that encourages me to use these techniques.[8]

These descriptions refer to sensations[9] rather than concrete descriptions. Viewing a tactile stitched illustration involves two senses: vision and touch. One study into the importance of touch concludes that 'texture may be important because it is specified visually as well as haptically.'[10] This research reinforces the instinctive knowledge of the artist.

Touch is one of the initial methods which babies as young as two months old actively use to explore and understand the world.[11] This information is then synthesised with visual perception so that infants who have felt a shape in the dark are then able to recognise it visually[12]. Morton and Heller suggest that texture is one of the more important haptic elements observing that:

> we do not enjoy aimlessly hoisting things of a given weight or tracing things to the same extent that we derive pleasure from just stroking things of certain textures and squeezing things of certain compressibilities.[13]

The fundamental importance of touch stimulates a lasting resonance which is reflected in our response to tactile illustrations.Research into haptic responses often focuses on cloth because of its intimate associations and universality.
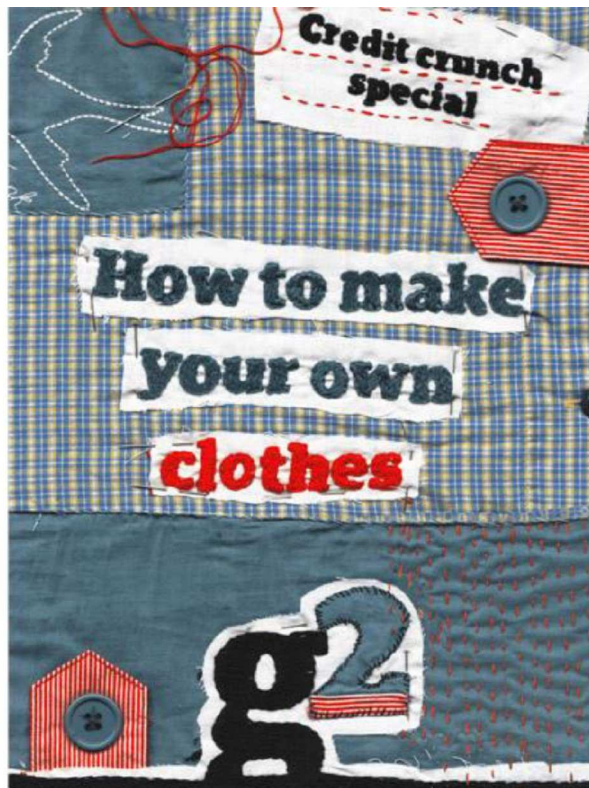
Figure 10: Hanna Melin, *How to Make Your Own Clothes*, G2, *The Guardian*, 28 April 2008.
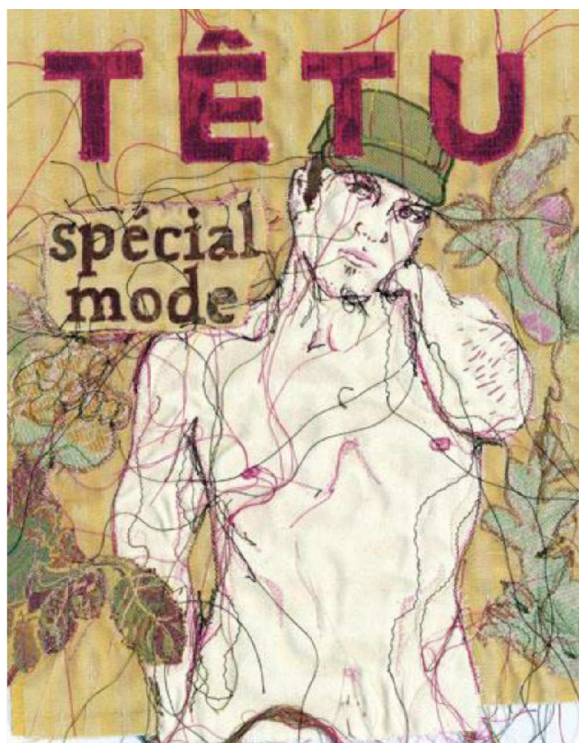

Figure 11: Louise Gardiner, *The Guardian Guide*, 2004.

Figure 12: Sandrine Pelletier, *Tetu Special Mode*, c.2003-6.

Despite the differences between Eastern and Western cultures[14] the texture of cloth is important in both, particularly in the context of early memories. Most cultures have myths and legends about cloth[15] and our language remains full of terms with roots that can be traced to cloth and stitch[16]. The styling of a recent Channel 4 television program called *The Family*[17] was based around a disintegrating cross-stitched sampler: precisely communicating the fact that the program was about the unravelling of domestic life (see Figures 21 and 22).

Within each culture the specific associations of a particular texture differs. For example, most Chinese respondents to a questionnaire by Delong, Wu and Bao liked touching wool, but most Americans did not[18]. The researchers concluded that 'the perception of value could influence the feeling of touch'[19] since wool is common in the US and a luxury in China.

Andrew investigates specific associations between fabric and texture in the context of Western culture. Relationships, such as silk with hair products; white linen with Estee Lauder and grey flannel with Austin Reed, seem natural, whereas perfume with red nylon or brown wool do not[20]. She points out that these perceptions change over time. Not long ago nylon was an aspirational product but today new nylon products, such as Tactel and Tencil have to be branded carefully to ensure that they are disassociated from the current negative perception of nylon[21].

Recognising the familiar textures of cloth in an illustration triggers a strong, almost sub-conscious response which is personal in both a cultural and individual context. Delong, Wu and Bao suggest that designers should use this knowledge to 'develop culturally-preferred palettes of touch properties through

Figure 13: *Abbey Mortgages Brochure* illustrations pp.11&13, 2008.
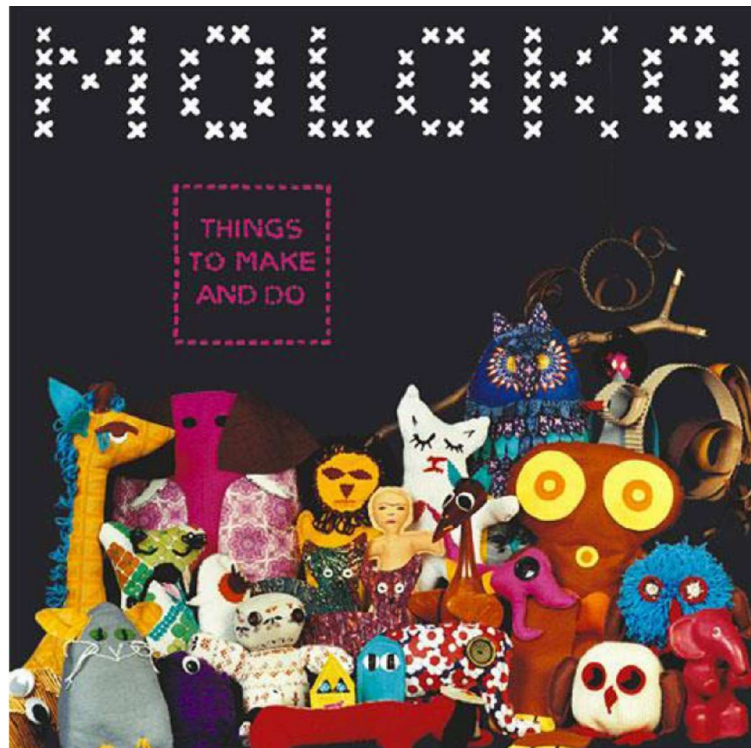

Figure 14: Lizzie Finn, *Moloko* Album Cover, 2000, Photography, Photoshop, doll making, cross stitch and machine embroidery

the study of the users' perceptions and touch preferences.'(22) The illustrators who use stitch are already considering this.

Feminine in an independent way and subversive in a cultural way

The cultural symbolism of embroidery provides a potentially complex palette for an illustrator. In Britain, since the early 1800s embroidery has been dismissed as 'women's work' - something to keep a woman occupied and out of the man's world. George Eliot describes this scathingly:

> A little dainty embroider had been a constant element in [her] life; that soothing occupation of taking stitches to produce what neither she nor anyone else wanted, was then the resource of many a well-born and unhappy woman.(23)

During this period, 'intellectual' discussions about the domestic activity of embroidery in the popular media tended to be negative, whereas there were many practical articles describing patterns, techniques, or fashion(24). As a result of this bias, embroidery came to symbolise the domestic; amateurish or bad execution; and the empty, shallow, unfulfilled housewife. Only recently is this being challenged.(25)

Embroidered illustrations which target the 'unfulfilled' housewife or evoke comfortable domesticity, such as those in Figure 13 taken from an Abbey mortgage brochure(26), tend to be photographically reproduced, traditional stitched objects as distinguished from illustrations created using stitch as a medium. These images are designed to 'evoke not only a home, but a socially advantaged home, securely placed in the upper reaches of the class structure.'(27) The Moloko album cover shown in Figure 14 also reproduces stitched items, but these were created by the illustrator and form an integral part of the design, which includes other stitched elements. There is a subtle,
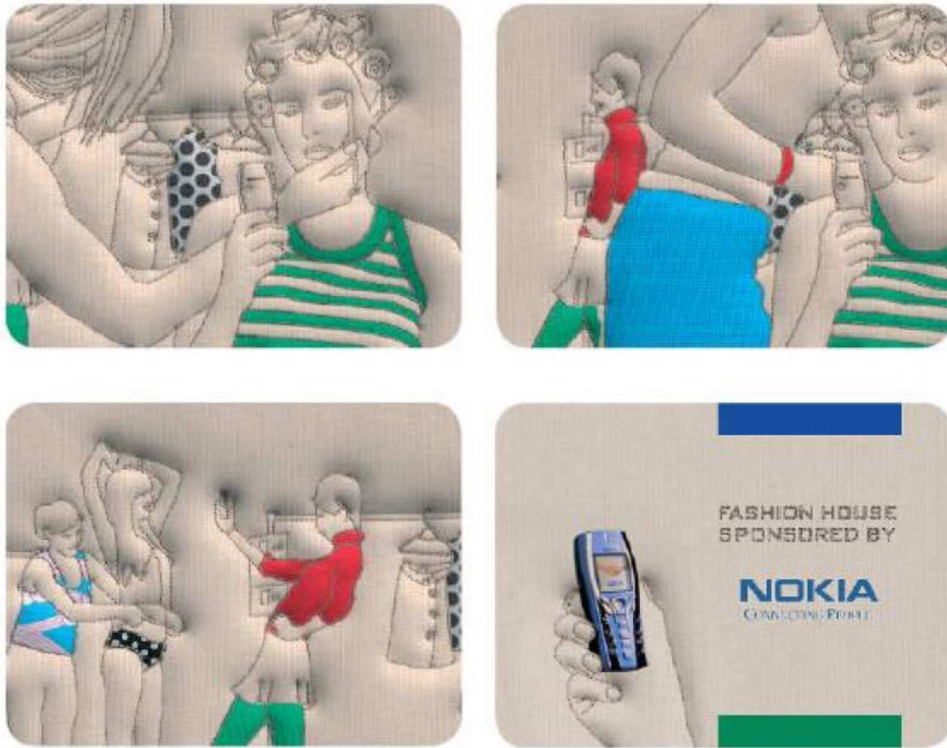
Figure 15: Lizzie Finn, Stills from animated Nokia idents for Channel 4, c.2008.
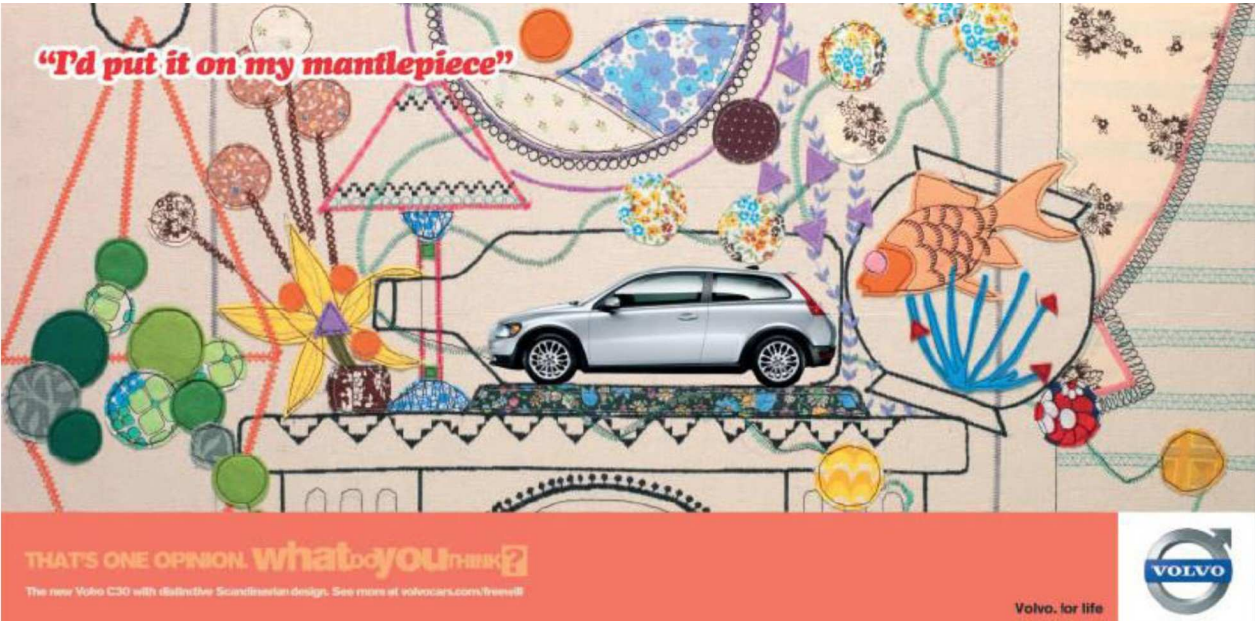

Figure 16: Lizzie Finn, Illustration for Volvo 'What do you think?' campaign, c.2008.

but important difference here; the album cover is a pastiche, but the brochure is not.

The current wave of feminism is beginning to question whether it is necessary to continue to discard feminine attitudes and aesthetics in favour of masculine ones. Rather than secretly indulging in sewing and knitting in the privacy of the home, women are publicly indulging in increasingly popular communities(28) such as Debbie Stoller's 'Stitch and Bitch' groups, the online store 'Etsy'(29) and smaller groups like the Shoreditch WI.(30) Jazz Mellor, who established the Shoreditch WI group, feels that when women arrived at 'ladette culture' they had taken the emulation of men's attitudes too far - harming 'women's self respect.'(31) This realisation challenges the cultural palette: replacing domestic subservience with an assertive femininity.

Stitched illustrations can therefore be commissioned to target young, independent women - an important growing market and one which would traditionally not have appreciated the aesthetic. Advertisements such as those for Apple and Nokia in Figures 3 and 15 respectively emulate a traditional masculine image using a feminine media. On the other hand, the Volvo advert in Figure 16 uses the traditional domestic image of a mantelpiece to the same effect. This is a post-modern technique which pastiches in a knowing way, flattering and appealing to those who recognise familiar elements, while simultaneously appealing to a new audience.

In keeping with much of the print media, Gina Cross, Art Buyer for The Guardian newspaper, generally commissions fabric and stitched illustrations for

Figure 20: Sacha Spencer Trace & Stacey Williams (for Marmalade Magazine), Selfridges Window, 2003, created by a team of embroiderers from the London College of Fashion and Debbie Stack.

Figure 19: Sandrine Pelletier, Kate Bush for *ID* Magazine article by Bjork, 2005.

Figure 18: Sandrine Pelletier with Gregoire Alexandre, Untitled for *Dazed and Confused* Madonna Special Issue, 2008.

'women's issues and health.'(32) Within this genre the illustrations are used in a variety of contexts as can be seen in Figures 8-12. Hanna Melin, who works in a range of media as well as stitch, says of selecting the medium for a particular illustration: 'if its about fabric, why not do it in fabric? Other times, I just use it because its beautiful.'(33)

Even in the context of the undoubtedly intimate and domestic subject of breastfeeding the stitched illustrations which Louise Gardiner created for *Saggy Boobs and Other Breastfeeding Myths*(34) (see Figure 2) are neither twee nor safe. They are bold, humorous contemporary and unapologetically feminine.

Sandrine Pelletier's illustrations for *Dazed and Confused* and *ID* magazines represent two very different, yet iconic, independent women, and show an innovative development in the creation of stitched illustrations. They are sophisticated images demonstrating a cross-over between illustration, fashion photography and fine art. Pelletier uses stitch because she feels it makes her images 'more alive and interesting in so many ways.'(35)

An even more ambitious embroidered piece was made for the windows of Selfridges in October 2003 by *Marmalade Magazine* (see Figure 20). These two large mechanical window displays appeared either side of the shop's main entrance and moved when the window was touched.(36) The subject of the piece was 'the lack of sex used by the fashion industry.' As well as the theme, the styling of the images (strongly referencing computer-generated imagery) suggests that the use of stitch is more about the feminine than about anti-technology. All of these disparate stitched illustrations are feminine: a strong,

> "It was hard to imagine what it was like for you back in the day"
>
> GWEN STEFANI

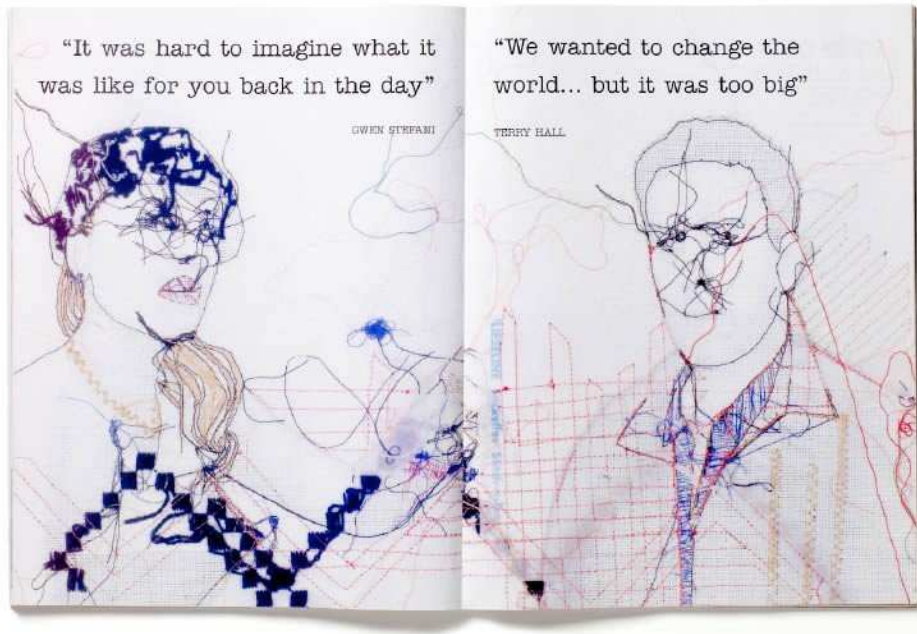> "We wanted to change the world... but it was too big"
>
> TERRY HALL

Figure 17a: Lizzie Finn Needlepoint and machine stitched portraits of Gwen Stefani and Terry Hall for *Dazed and Confused*

Figure 17: 1. The Woodbine Agency for Lamp 2. tenn_do_ten for chico 3. The Pink Pear Design Company for Rummage 4. Hammerpress for Natasha's Mulberry & Mott

independent, sexy version of feminine; not the coy, domestic dependence with which feminists of the previous two centuries associated stitch.

Handmade in a digital sort of way and graphic in a crafty sort of way

This description(38) of Lizzie Finn's work highlights the third important factor in the increasing use of stitch in illustration - the inter-relationship of textiles with technology and the increasing accessibility of computers. The current scapegoat for many of Western society's apparent problems is our dependence on technology and, in particular, the computer. The increase in popularity of craft and 'the handmade' is often cited as evidence of our reaction against our society's computerisation. This is not as clear-cut as it might seem.

The creation of textiles has a long and intertwined relationship with technology: it was one of the first 'crafts' to be automated and the punch cards used on industrial looms were adapted to be the input device for the first computers. As well as mechanisation, the potential of new fibres and technologies are continuously being explored(39). William Morris is often cited as an example of a textile artist who 'crafted' as a reaction against technology. However he was not against technology itself, but against its potential to dehumanise and enslave. As Greenhalgh(40) points out: 'people bring machines into existence(41) and it is they, not machines, who negate or enhance the conditions of existence.'(41) The textile industry has usually been successful in working with, rather than against, technical development.

Embroidery's close relationship with technology was celebrated in 2008 with the nostalgic 'Schiffli Project' which was initiated by Dr Melanie Miller to save
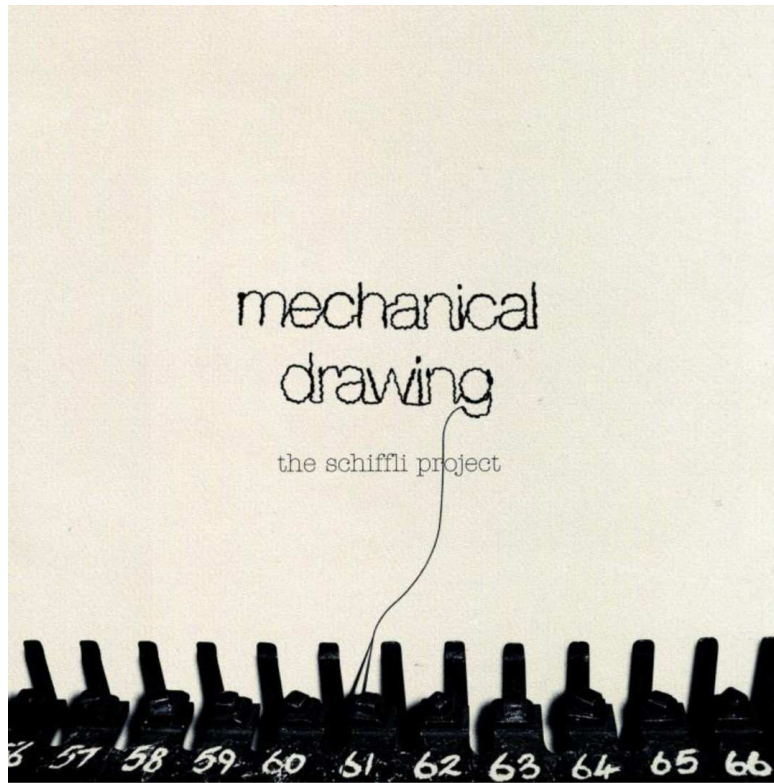
Figure 23: *Mechanical Drawing: The Schiffli Project* Pamphlet Cover, 2008. Designer unknown.

Figure 24: Jane Harris *Potential Beauty*, 2002-2003.

the last working example of a 19th Century embroidery machine. In her introductory essay to the catalogue for the resulting exhibition (which was appropriately illustrated with stitch, as seen in Figure 23), Professor Lesley Millar expresses surprise that the images produced were so 'modern'. She went on to say:

> If a neutrality of statement had been expected from these artists as a result of a sense of subservience to this machine, this is certainly not so; each artist has approached the machine through their own visual language.(42)

Those artists who understand that technology is a tool or a medium are able to work with it and push the boundaries of both stitch and illustration and create individual and contemporary work.

Technology is now an integral part of our lives and increasingly people are becoming less self-conscious about it. Jane Harris discusses this in her paper, at the Craft Council's conference *Craft, Creativity and the Computer Controlled Age* noting that the fear of new technology has been removed for those 'coming behind us.'(43) This is clearly described on the back cover of *Fingerprint: The Art of Using Handmade Elements in Graphic Design*:

> Our infatuation with - and the backlash against - technology are over. Today's best designers have learned to embrace its advantages and think beyond its limitations by combining the power of the computer with the tactile qualities of handmade elements.(44)

The majority of stitched illustrations in this essay have been created by hand then manipulated or converted for printing using a computer. Contemporary illustrators' acceptance of this process ensures the strength of the images they create.

Where an image has been created totally in the digital realm the lack of

Figure 21: *The Family*, Channel 4 Billboard Poster, 2008, Designer unknown.

Figure 22: *The Family*, Channel 4 Web Banner, 2008, Designer unknown.

'human touch' is clear. This is seen when comparing the poster and web banner for the Channel 4 program *The Family* (see Figures 21 and 22). The web banner has only existed digitally and although some threads are shown unravelling and hanging they have been carefully placed by a designer so as to ensure that the text remains legible. The billboard has a more textural, alive quality, which is not replicated in the simple digital drawing. A similar effect can be seen in the logos in Figure 17 which use digital emulations of stitch.

Jane Harris(45) explains that there are two elements which make it difficult to capture fabric in the digital realm: naturalistic movement - clearly demonstrated in the web banner and logos - and naturally occurring imperfections - also missing from the Figures 17 and 22. These elements are difficult to achieve because of the complexity of the algorithms required and the high levels of computing power needed to run them(46). Harris and others have worked hard to resolve these issues, particularly as they impact on the realistic rendering of characters in animated films and video games.

A third important factor, which affects the representation of fabric is resolution. A web image such as that shown in Figure 22 needs to be created with a very low resolution in order to 'work' effectively in its specific environment. The web is an extreme case, but many digital images are compromised by the resolution at which they can be created and viewed. In contrast, an analogue image inherently contains much more information. As technology progresses it is possible to take advantage of the additional capacity to render images at higher resolutions.

Domestic television and computer games consoles have recently improved in

Figure 25: *Little Big Planet* Interface showing one of the worlds, 2008.

Figure 26: *Sackboy*, the character from Little Big Planet, 2008. Interestingly Sackboy can be dressed as you wish and, despite the fact that it has no effect on the game play, additional outfits can be purchased and are being purchased.

resolution. Just before Christmas 2008 a new Playstation game: *Little Big Planet* was launched taking advantage of this. It has been heralded as ground-breaking in many ways and significantly improves naturalistic rendering of fabric in a consumer environment, bringing the stitched-cloth aesthetic to life more successfully than any other virtual cloth to date, outside of specialist domains. Although still not as accurate as an analogue image, it is close and, importantly, the aesthetic of cloth is being appreciated by a wider audience. A game is traditionally a very masculine environment and it is interesting to read the numerous positive reviews of this aesthetic.(47)

When illustrators discuss their use of technology they emphasise that it is a tool or media which needs to be used with skill:

> There are things you can do with digital media that you can't do with traditional media, but ultimately software programs are just another medium - they have limits. What is limitless is each artist's own creativity and imagination.(48)

It is certain that the portrayal of stitch in the digital world will continue to improve. The resulting images however are likely to be different to, rather than copies of, handmade images and the two should exist together. For now analogue and digital techniques and media are being used together to create imaginative and beautiful illustrations which capture attention in a crowded visual landscape.

Conclusion

A glance at the montage on the title page of this essay shows a wide range of styles and applications of stitch in contemporary illustration. In many of them the choice of media is a relatively subtle one: they could have been rendered in

Figure 1: Key to Title Page images:

1. Sandrine Pelletier, Tetu Special Mode, 2003-6.
2. Sacha Spencer Trace & Stacey Williams (for Marmalade Magazine), Selfridges Window, 2003.0
3. Lizzie Finn, Advert for Apple Computers, c.2002.
4. Sandrine Pelletier, Magazine Image: L'Artishow, 2003-6. Source: http://maskara.ch/magaz.html.
5. Sandrine Pelletier with Gregoire Alexandre, Untitled for Dazed and Confused Madonna Special Issue, 2008.
6. Paula Sanz Caballero, Illustrations from Elle UK, December 2002, Hand stitched, thread and fabric, 20x30cm.
7. Louise Gardiner, The Guardian Guide, 2004 .
8. Eleanor Bowley, Blowback Magazine, c.2007.
9. Caroline Hwang, New York Time Funny Pages, date unknown.
10. Laura McCafferty, Charlie and Heidi Buying IceCream, 2006, Textile, Print, Hand-stitching.
11. Louise Gardiner: Embroidered Lady with Pram from The Guardian, 24 April 2003. Original artwork, 28cmx30cm.
12. Hanna Melin, A man buys a motorcycle on Ebay thinking he made a real bargain. its a shame the motorcycle doesn't work at all, Illustration for a short story, The New York Times, 25 February 2007.
13. Lizzie Finn, Illustration for Volvo 'What do you think?' campaign, c. 2008.
14. CarolineHwang, Your Healthy Hair Guide, date unknown.

more traditional drawing or digital media. The texture which the stitch provides gives them a liveliness and humanity which creates the initial interest in the images: not just because it is different from the vector-images created on the computer, but because this texture is important to our psyche. There is more to the images than texture alone.

Each one has a distinctly confident feminine aesthetic. In some, such as Hannah Melin's Ebay biker (Figure 9), this is more subtle than in others, such as Louise Gardiner's Lady with Pram (Figure 8). None of them allude to embroidery as a symbol of domestic drudgery as it was in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. The most domestic: the Volvo on the mantelpiece, has a complex visual mix of a car (traditionally masculine) presented in pride of place in a pretty domestic interior (traditionally feminine). The illustrations are a celebration of life and of individuals asserting themselves positively, not fighting against, or intimidated by, technological or masculine dominance.

None of the images bears the heavy hand of technical assistance, although to varying degrees many of them have been manipulated and developed in the digital environment. It does not seem important to the understanding of the images themselves whether or not technology has been involved in their creation. The illustrators have unparalleled access to powerful computers which they unselfconsciously treat as a medium or tool or relegate to the background while concentrating on hand-crafting. All of these elements ensure that these powerful, interesting images are successful illustrations: standing out from the babble of visual media in which they compete for our attention.

Endnotes

1. The author wishes to acknowledge the influence of Lizzie Finn's description of her work (quoted below) in the phrasing of this title, and the subsequent section titles.

2. This fact is the subject of many of the recent treatise about design, illustration and graphic imaging. In particular the following include useful cultural contexts related to the thoughts included in this essay. Poynor, Rick, *Obey the Giant: Life in the Image World*, London:August Media Ltd, 2001; Jobling, Paul and Crowley, David, *Graphic Design: Reproductions and Representations since 1800*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1996; Sparke, Penny, *An Introduction to Design and Culture*, 1900 to the Present, London:Routledge, 2004.

3. In the survey of the use of handmade in illustration Viction:Workshop notes that of all the handcrafted techniques employed 'embroidery is the most popular. It is an art or handcraft raised and stitched with a needle or sewing machine in yarn or threads of silk, cotton, gold, silver, metal or other possible materials upon any woven fabric, leather paper or even a piece of wet clay...' Viction: *Workshop, Illustration Play: Craving for the Extraordinary*, Hong Kong: Viction: Workshop, 2007, p.4. This observation is also made in other similar surveys of contemporary illustration, including Rivers, Charlotte, 'The Next Big Thing', *Computer Arts Projects: The Illustration Issue*, August 2008, pp. 58-67.

4. Lizzie Finn describing her work in: Hyland, Angus and Bell, Roanne, *Hand-to-Eye: Contemporary Illustration*, London:Laurence King Publishing, 2003.

5. Poynor, Rick, *Obey the Giant: Life in the Image World*, p.212.

6. Using handmade illustrations as a reaction to slick images is not new - the punk movement challenged the received idea of polished design and produced images which felt more alive and authentic, communicating in a more ephemeral way. As a result they were perceived as more genuine. Poynor, Rick, *Obey the Giant: Life in the Image World*, p.210; Chen Design Associates, *Fingerprint: The Art of Using Handmade Elements in Graphic Design*, How Books, Ohio, US, 2006.

7. Taken from responses to a questionnaire sent in September/October 2008 to 30 artists and illustrators who use stitch as a media and to 4 people involved in commissioning illustrations.

8. Bowley, E, September 2008, ibid.

9. Erwin Straus (a neurophenomenologer) defines perception and sensation as antonyms: perception as the experience of rational, verbal world and sensation as the experience of pre-rational, non-verbal. In the latter the 'difference between subject and object is less clear.' This distinction is useful here. Erwin Straus *The Primary World of Senses: A Vindication of the Sensory Experience*, 1935, p.258. Quoted in Barnett, Pennina, 'Folds, Fragments, Surfaces: Towards a Poetics of Cloth', *Textures of Memory :The Poetics of Cloth*, Nottingham:Angel Row Gallery, 1999, p.31.

10. Heller, Morton A and Schiff, William (Eds), The Psychology of Touch, New Jersey: Lawrence

Erlbaum and Assocs, 1991, p.153.

11. Firstly they collect shape (topological) difference, then, from about six months (as motor skills improve), they perceive more detail, including texture. Ibid.

12. Ibid, p.140.
13. Ibid p.153.

14. In Western cultures the senses tend to be compartmentalised and discussed in isolation. In contrast Eastern cultures are more likely to 'learn to listen to colours, see a sound, or feel a space'. Delong, Marilyn, Wu, Juan Juan and Bao, Mingxin, 'May I Touch it?', Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture, Berg, Vol 5, Issue 1, Spring 2007, p.36.

15. This was celebrated in the exhibition: The Fabric of Myth held at Compton Verney, Warwickshire, 21 June - 7 September, 2008.

16. We talk of the 'fabric' of society and discuss emotions which 'unravel', 'tangle', 'fray'; a story can be 'woven', 'sewn' or 'pieced together': Krugar, Kathryn Sullivan, 'Clues and Cloth: Seeking ourselves in The Fabric of Myth', The Fabric of Myth, Warwickshire:Compton Verney, 2008 p.10.

17. First broadcast in September 2008.

18. Delong, Marilyn, Wu, Juan Juan and Bao, Mingxin, 'May I Touch it?', Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture, p. 36.

19. Ibid p.43.

20. Andrew, Sonja, 'Textile Semantics: Considering a Communication-based reading of Textiles', Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture, Berg, Vol 6, Issue 1, March 2008, pp.34-65.

21. Ibid, p.39.

22. Delong, Marilyn, Wu, Juan Juan and Bao, Mingxin, 'May I Touch it?', p.47.
23. George Eliot, Felix Holt, 1866, Chapter 7, Quoted in The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1992 p.269:5.

24. Sometimes these occur side-by-side as in an edition of the Ladies Magazine in 1810 which published an article suggesting that the time spent stitching would be better spent becoming educated alongside patterns and details of court embroideries of the month: Parker, Rozsika and Pollock, Griselda, Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology, London:Pandora Press, 1981, p.62.

25. A review of the 2008 logo trends featured in Creative Review included a group labelled

'Stitch' (see Figure 16). These was described in positive terms, with only a passing and dismissive reference to stereotypical 'poor' embroidery, as follows:

'This common language of mundane elements takes on a refreshing, often feminine beauty when

layered together with great taste. Just remember that the difference between a tablecloth and a haute couture gown is not the material, but knowing what to do with it.'
Gardner, Bill, 'Logo Lounge: Logo Trend Report 2008', Creative Review, June 2008, p.52.
The direct reference to the difference between amateurish and professional stitch separates the negative connotation and asserts a positive position for stitch to occupy. This article is one of the increasing number which refers to stitch in a professional discussion without either belittling the activity and with only a dismissive mention of its previous connotation.

26. Abbey, Mortgage Brochure, collected from the bank in Summer, 2008.

27. Parker, Rozsika, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, London: The Women's Press Ltd, 1996, 2nd Edition, p.2.

28. It should be noted that using embroidery to empower is not new: the suffragettes also recognised the subversive power of combining the feminine activity of embroidery with asserting their independence. As symbolised by the collections of signatures embroidered on handkerchiefs while they were imprisoned. Ibid.

29. Found at the URL: http://www.etsy.com.

30. The Shoreditch WI has an average age of 25 years. It was founded by Jazz Mellor who clarified her position as a modern woman in an interview for The Telegraph: 'I definitely class myself as a feminist, but feminism has changed. For so long women tried to show that they're equal to men by trying to prove they're the same as them, culminating in ladette culture.' Quoted in Rhodes, Chloe, 'Women's Institute: is this the trendiest WI in Britain?', The Telegraph, 26-Aug-08, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/portal/main.jhtml?xml=/portal/2008/04/23/ftwi123.xml.

31. Ibid.

32. Gina Cross, in response to a questionnaire sent by the author in September/October 2008.

33. Hanna Melin, in response to a questionnaire sent by the author in September/October 2008.

34. Finigan, Valerie, *Saggy Boobs and Other Breastfeeding Myths*, Manchester:The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, 2008.

35. Sandrine Pelletier, in response to a questionnaire sent by the author in September/October 2008.

36. A video of the construction of the windows can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfETPY3OQls

37. Description on the artist's online portfolio: http://www.allofus.com/?path=Home.Work.Project&id=115.

38. Lizzie Finn describing her work in Hyland, Angus and Bell, Roanne, *Hand-to-Eye:*

Contemporary Illustration.

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