

Sashiko and Boro Denim Patches

These techniques are Japanese in origin and they are methods used for many centuries to repair work clothing. They have become popular in recent times as decorative ways of doing visible repair on clothing. Sashiko is the stitching (it means 'little stabs') and boro is the patching. Traditionally a white cotton thread was used on indigo dyed fabric. We used denim patches and white embroidery thread as a nod to this tradition.

You will need:

Some denim patches (15 cm x 15 cm) cut from an old pair of jeans

White embroidery thread

A needle (preferably with a long narrow eye)

Scraps of printed cotton

A few pins

Take your denim square, select a few scraps of printed cotton, cut to desired size and arrange in an abstract pattern that pleases you (you can overlap them if you wish). Pin them in place. Cut a length of thread (about the length from your wrist to elbow). If using standard embroidery thread it is made of six strands, so carefully split your length into two (3 strands in each).

Thread your needle and tie one or two knots to make a large knot in the end of the thread. Starting at the top right hand corner, bring your needle through to the top side of your work (knot is now at the back) and begin sewing a running stitch in a straight line from right to left. Running stitch is very simple: the needle goes in and out of the fabric, creating straight stitches. It is a good idea to keep your stitches an even length with even spaces in between each stitch.

When you get to the end of the row, bring your needle up just under the end of the row, turn your fabric and continue stitching so that you end up with row after row, covering the whole denim patch. As your thread shortens, remember to leave enough thread so that you can secure it at the back. Do this by bringing your needle through to the back, then passing it through your last stitch a couple of times (not through fabric) and creating a knot as you go. Then continue the row you are stitching with your freshly threaded needle. Remove pins as you go along, once each cotton piece has been secured by the running stitches. Make sure you smooth the fabric as you sew, not pulling your stitches too tightly as this will create puckering.

Use your finished patch to decorate a bag or jacket, or you could add backing fabric and use as a



coaster.